

Wildman The Red Tail Hawk

Story and photo by Rich Peine



If there ever was a bird that has the look of strength and confidence, it's the Red Tailed Hawk (Buteo jamaicensis). The Red Tail is the most common Hawk in the United States, and ranges from as far south as Panama to Alaska and Canada. Although they are not migratory they will travel to where prey is most abundant. Winter brings the northernmost members of the clan south to catch the rodents, rabbits, snakes and lizards that comprise most of their diet.

Red Tails range in size from 18 to 26 inches, with the female being the larger of the two. They mate in the air (ooh, baby!!!) and usually lay 1 to 3 eggs. Their eyesight is eight times more powerful than a human's.

The Native Americans believe that the Red tailed hawk is a spirit guide. It is a messenger and a visionary. If you see a Red Tail often,

consider what the bird is trying to communicate to you. If you Google "Red Tail Hawk Spirit Guide", you can learn how to receive your messages.

You can see one of these fine creatures at the Wild Bird Center MM 95 bay side. Her name is Wildman. Guess they didn't know her sex when she was rescued about 3 years ago around Tallahassee. She won't be able to return to the wild but does catch the occasional mouse or gecko that wanders into her compound.

The Coconut Telegraph supports the Wild Bird Center and the wonderful work they are doing. Stop by there and check out Wildman and the other residents. Put a few bucks into the tip container if you can. Volunteers are always welcome. Do what you can for these magnificent creatures and the good folk who care for them. Go to www.fkwbc.org or call 305-852-4486.

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Life Lessons of a Legend

By CC Hemingway

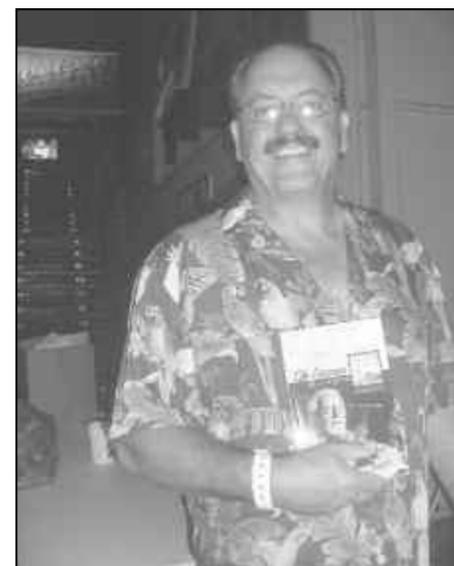
A lot of stories have been written about Capt. Tony Tarracino, but the book that was released this week bears the distinction of having been written by Captain Tony himself and Brad Manard, a small-town school Superintendent from Solon, Iowa.

Brad and his wife Denise had met the Captain on their first trip to Key West six years ago and they were enchanted. When they returned six months later, Brad made his way to Capt. Tony and said "Do you remember me, Capt. Tony?" Tony looked up and smiled at Brad and said "Where's Denise?"...a testament to the legendary "Casanova of Key West!"

They spoke of writing a book, and one day months later, Brad received a call from Capt. Tony to apologize for his failure to return Brad's calls. He'd been hospitalized with pneumonia and they had to install a pacemaker and put him on oxygen. He'd had his first serious reckoning with his own mortality, and he said to Brad "I'm not going to be alive forever, Brad. Let's tell people what I think. I've lived a full life, an amazing life. I've got a lot to teach, and I won't live forever...Let's tell the world about my philosophy.

So "Life Lessons..." came into being, based on tales told by the Captain to teach a middle-aged mid-western educator the lessons of his life. This is the tale told by the Legend himself and the man who was privileged to share the wisdom of his years in the telling. These are the stories that reveal the soul of the man, what motivated and excited him... the stories behind the stories...and in Tony's own voice.

By the time the book had arrived in mid-October, Capt. Tony had once again been hospitalized in the ICU at Lower Keys Medical Center for



Brad Manard co-author of Capt. Tony's book "Life Lessons of a Legend".

heart and lung problems. Book signings were scheduled for Tuesday, Oct.28 at Captain Tony's Saloon, and on Thursday, Oct. 30 at Dirty Harry's, and again at Capt. Tony's Saloon on Sat. Nov. 1, all in the hopes that Captain Tony would be out of the hospital and well enough to attend.

Capt. Tony was still in the ICU on Tuesday; so the hospital staff arranged a book signing event for Tony's family, the author and his wife in one of the conference rooms, and Tony signed as many books as his strength would allow. Later that day the party moved to Captain Tony's Saloon, and Brad and Tony's family autographed books and swapped stories celebrating Capt. Tony's life while people lined up to buy multiple copies of the book. Brad had sent a

thousand books to Key West and they had to order more for the next signing. When his eldest son, Louis Tarracino visited Capt. Tony in the hospital the next day and told him how well the book was being received, Capt. Tony actually cried tears of joy.

On Thursday, C. W. Colt, the Royal Minstrel of the Conch Republic and a long-time friend of Capt. Tony's, hosted a benefit book signing at Dirty Harry's on Duval Street in Key West to help out with Tony's medical expenses. A huge tip jar on the



Louie Tarracino with Capt. Tony's Vegas fund.

table said "For Capt. Tony's Next Las Vegas Trip." Although it was hoped that the Captain would attend via conference call, his family was on hand in his absence to greet the throng that came to pay their respects, hoping the Legend himself would be there to sign their books. C.W. Colt read one of the passages from the book and announced that

there would be a reading every year of another of Capt. Tony's Life Lessons.

On Saturday, Nov. 1, while Brad and Denise sat outside Capt. Tony's Saloon with people crowding the sidewalk to get their books signed, Capt. Tony Tarracino passed away quietly at 2:15 PM at Lower Keys Medical Center surrounded by his wife Marty and eight of his children.

Born in Elizabeth, NJ on August 10, 1916, itinerant gambler Tony Tarracino made his way to Key West with \$12 in his pocket in 1948. He was a shrimper, a fishing mate, and a charter boat captain after he purchased the Greyhound. He was a gun runner for Cuban mercenaries during the Bay of

Pigs invasion, and he got involved in the Haitian invasion in the mid-sixties and saved the US government a lot of embarrassment. In the early fifties Captain Tony worked as a diving stand-in for Robert Wagner in a movie called "Beneath the Twelve Mile Reef," and as recently as 2005 he played a pirate in a movie called CrossBones. In 1958 he purchased the bar on Greene St., changed its name to Capt. Tony's Saloon, and a new era began in Key West history.

Capt. Tony lived in the moment and he savored every moment like fine wine. He was one of the most genuine, compassionate human beings who has ever trod the earth. For many years you could always find Capt. Tony at his Saloon, surrounded by hordes of people seeking an audience with the legendary Captain; his

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