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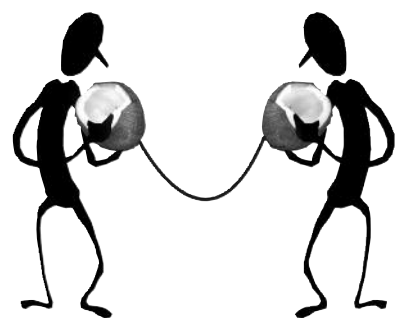
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Editorial

runs around with a tray of junk covered in plastic wrap? He claims it is for the Federation for the Blind. I asked to see his credentials and they were laughable. Go back to Miami, dude. Quit preying on our giving nature here in the Keys.

Experience has made us, the locals, mistrusting. My rule of thumb is not to trust anyone I, or my friends, haven't known for at least three years. If you can stick it out down here for a few years you are probably legit.

Most of the time you can rely on your judgement of character, but go with your first instinct. If something seems fishy, and the smell's not coming from the fish-cleaning table, my advice is to do a simple background check before you invite them to your home or employ them.

Chances are if they were a criminal where they came from it won't be long until they are one here too.

Did they have a job when they got here or are they looking for "under the table" work? Do they seem genuine and real or are they overly (fake) nice and very needy? Do they fly

off the handle over trivial things? If so, chances are they proclaim integrity but have none.

Everyone makes mistakes and most people deserve a chance to start over but not everyone learns from their mistakes and can or will change. So, locals, watch out for these phonies, and new residents, cut us some slack! When we don't welcome you with open arms it's only because we have been burned. Give us some time and we'll come around. If you are what you say you are, over time, you will be welcomed and will fit right in.

So newbies, if you moved here to escape the bad checks you've written and plan to do it again, keep moving. The Keys is too small a place for your insincere antics. If you can't renew your license because you've had too many violations and steal someone else's plate so you can drive, then cheers to the bad "car-ma" coming your way (true story). Eventually you'll get caught, just hope you haven't disheartened too many locals on your way down the wrong road.

Editorial: Island Life... The curse of the locals Part II

With two and a half million yearly visitors coming to the Keys, we who live here meet many of them.

"Oh, you live here! That must be nice," they say. "You are so lucky!"

For the most part, we locals find these brief visitors easy to take. They book a hotel room, spend a few days and drop a ton of money at several of our fine local dining establishments. We love them.

Then there are the tourists-turned-residents. The people who move here and then wonder why they don't receive a friendly reception.



After living in paradise for many years you meet a lot of phony people. Often, these are people who have committed moral bankruptcy and relocated to our islands to recreate themselves.

One of the worst cases of this was a man that stayed here a few months after 9/11. His story was that he had lost his wife and kids in the World Trade Center during the September attack. What we didn't know then were there was no children killed in the Twin Towers, but his story got a lot of people to buy him drinks and food, and offer him other help. Locals welcomed him and they got burned.

How about the other phony who

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