

Conch Characters / Around Town



Roger and Margo Arnold and their grandkids at the Elks Children's Christmas party.



Captain Lolly Carpenter of the Carolina Moon snapped this photo of a smiling manatee.



Michael Trixx gets a little help from an audience member. See him most Mondays, Wednesdays & Fridays at The Lorelei.



Annual Police Officer Assistance Trust Ride for Kids at Gilberts.



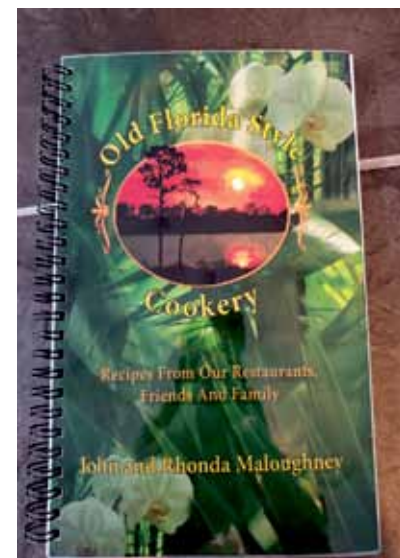
Captain Joe Fox has officially retired! The Nautilimo has moved to Tampa. Goodbye, Joe!



Santa greeted everyone coming into the Lorelei in December.



The Gypsy Lane band features two original members of The Village People, so of course they play that song at the Lorelei, to the delight of their fans!



Former Lorelei managers John & Rhonda have written a cookbook of restaurant favorites, which you can buy at the Lorelei gift shop.



Recent Lorelei wedding - they can host your wedding or rehearsal dinner; LoreleiCabanaBar.com.



The PKS children sang Christmas carols at the annual fundraiser held at the Lorelei in early December.



The crew at Enrico's in Islamorada.

Teaching and Reaching Kids With Keys-Themed Children's Books

by Marilee Free and Valerie Handelsman

What an inspiration to children and adults alike, a children's book author! Valerie Handelsman, a Florida Keys local for 19 years, writes stories that are known to capture the imaginations of children, while sharing the importance of family, community and the environment. She has written a number of children's books, "Lu Lu's Little Lights" being the latest.

A retired teacher from Miami-Dade County schools, Valerie taught at the elementary, middle and high school levels and graduated from Florida International University where she studied elementary education and environmental science. Valerie uses her background to

uniquely write fictional stories that subtly move into non-fiction, and finally delve into a well-known lesson in life for young and old.

Valerie gives thanks to her 9th grade language arts teacher, Mrs. Snyder of Filer Junior High, for leaving a lasting impression. She explained that her class project, researching the writings of Edgar Allen Poe, inspired her to write poetry... lots of poetry. The school published 3 of her poems in the 'Quill,' the school's own literature book, thus starting her teenage desire to write.

You will find Valerie among the gifted and talented authors, crafters, artists and musicians at Art



Author Valerie Handelsman

Under the Oaks at San Pedro Church on January 18, 2020. She will have copies of her books available there. Other books she has written are: "Lobster Monica", avail-

able in English and Spanish. She and local illustrator Carmen Sotolongo Kelley teamed up and created "Lobster Monica" and "Lu Lu's Little Lights." "A Coral Reef Neighborhood," "Birdies' Seaside Gym" and "The Turtles Go to School" are all illustrated by Lynn Jasmin. "Benny the Scuba-Diving Hummingbird" was illustrated by Cortney Tucker. "The Sleepy Pelican Police" was illustrated by Erin Louise Miller. "Juaquinito A Manatee Hero" was illustrated by James Marohn.

Thank you, Valerie, for sharing information about your entertaining and enlightening children's books. The awareness you create will help inspire children, not only to care for our environment but to encourage the next generation.

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The Florida Keys Elks Lodge had their children's Christmas party, December 14. Thanks to the Elks National Foundation for the Beacon Grant that makes this possible every year. Pictured is Michael Trixx, famous Florida Keys Magician with Julia Baizs, assistant. Each year the event gets better with decorating cookies, playing games, crafting, magic show, pictures with Santa plus lunch. There were approximately 80 kids plus the parents attending. Many thanks to students from Coral Shores High School for volunteering their time, and of course, to our fabulous members.

'Twas the Month After Christmas

'Twas the month after Christmas and all through the house Nothing would fit me, not even a blouse.

The cookies I'd nibbled, the eggnog I'd taste. All the holiday parties had gone to my waist.

When I got on the scales there arose such a number! When I walked to the store (less a walk than a lumber).

I'd remember the marvelous meals I'd prepared; The gravies and sauces and beef nicely rared, The wine and the rum balls, the bread and the cheese And the way I'd never said, "No thank you, please."

As I dressed myself in my husband's old shirt And prepared once again to do battle with dirt— I said to myself, as I only can "You can't spend a winter disguised as a man!"

So—away with the last of the sour cream dip, Get rid of the fruit cake, every cracker and chip. Every last bit of food that I like must be banished 'Til all the additional ounces have vanished.

I won't have a cookie—not even a lick. I'll want only to chew on a long celery stick. I won't have hot biscuits, or corn bread, or pie. I'll munch on a carrot and quietly cry.

I'm hungry, I'm lonesome, and life is a bore— But Isn't that what January is for? Unable to giggle, no longer a riot. Happy New Year to all and to all a good diet!

