



# The Historical Quarterly

of The St. Lucie Historical Society, Inc.

Vol. 41 No. 1

Winter 2023

## Alice Micco Snow's kindness was a great gift to me

*The author grew up in Fort Pierce and resides here now.*

*She earned a doctorate in anthropology from the University of Florida and taught at Florida Gulf Coast University.*

By Susan Enns Stans

Sometimes God hands you a gift which you can never forget. **Alice Micco Snow** and our book, "Healing Plants: Medicine of the Florida Seminole Indians," were that gift to me. I met Alice on the day I arrived at the Brighton Seminole Reservation outside Okeechobee in 1993. I had made appointments with the Board and Council government representatives from Brighton to discuss my hopes to conduct my dissertation research in the community regarding "Social Learning Theory," attitudes and beliefs about alcohol. They told me that it was totally up to individuals to talk to me freely.

My next concern was to find a place to stay, hopefully with someone in the community. **Jack Smith**, the Council representative, mentioned that he had an aunt, Alice Snow, who lived across the street from him who had let relatives and friends live with her. He told me, "Her house is the one with the "ponce" (Coca Cola) vending machine on the front porch on the horseshoe, the curved street in the middle of the community.

I met Alice that day. I went to her house and explained the situation and asked if she would be interested. Untested or unknown, she said yes and showed me the bedroom that would be mine. I liked her immediately and she must have liked me, offering me the room without a background check

or references. We had instant affection and would laugh about it later. Thus began our long association. In exchange for lodging, I offered to help clean and cook. We laughed later because we were usually too busy with outside events and outside meals to do either. The tribe also offered cleaning services for free to elder members as well.

I became her shadow. But many in the community called her my "mama" because we were always together.

Even though there was a U.S. health service clinic at the reservation (a part of the promises of a much earlier treaty), Alice explained that the people used Indian medicine along with Western medicine. She saw that this dual participation would probably disappear as the people became more and more used to depending on outside healing. Some Indian medicine had no equivalence in Western medicine, like death medicine.

Death was a solemn and community occasion with all visiting, bringing food, and sitting around for hours with the bereaved under the ancient chickee. Many of the residents have a chickee, the traditional house on a platform with a palm thatched roof, on their property for storage, for family gatherings, even for carpools and lawnmowers. Traditional foods were anxiously looked forward to be served. A guest would



*Susan Enns Stans (l) with Alice Micco Snow in 1993 gathering plants during research for their book on Seminole medicine.*

## Welcome - New or Returning Members

Sue Favorite, Membership Chairman

Tafft Fisher Abt • Sid Joiner

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## The President's Message

by Nancy Bennett

Happy New Year, everyone! Having just finished a busy year, we're eager to get going on another year of enjoyable activities and community service.

We appreciate our members who pitched in to help with the annual history festival Jan. 14 in downtown Fort Pierce, in and around the century-old Sunrise Theatre. The event, organized by Indian River Magazine and co-sponsored by our society, celebrates several anniversaries important in the history of the community. Magazine publisher **Gregory Enns** and his staff deserve hearty appreciation for their efforts. We're proud to be taking part.

Coming up soon, of course, is the annual St. Lucie County Fair which starts in late February. We'll need some volunteers for our exhibit booth as usual.

As of December, our society had a total of 341 members (counting individuals, families and businesses) as compiled by membership chairperson **Sue Favorite**. Board member **Robyn Hutchinson**, who arranges the speakers for our dinner meetings, continues to provide an interesting array of programs. Board member **Roger Miller**, who tallies volunteer activities monthly, reports the number of regular volunteers is holding steady in the low twenties. We thank them all but would like to attract more.

Let's have a great year in 2023. Δ

## Bulletin Boosters

Help support a lively and useful SLHS Historical Quarterly. A \$10 donation will add your name to the Bulletin Boosters roster for a full year of Quarterly editions. Please give your \$10 donation to Treasurer Bob Burdge. Many thanks. Names of current bulletin Boosters are listed below (with expiration month and year).

Leonard & Peggy Berg -----4/24	Richard & Priscilla Goff----- 10/23	Holly Theuns -----7/23
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Thomas Bailey ----- 10/22	Lelaine B. Rice -----7/23	



**HOLIDAY FUN** -- Young people getting set to ride on the St. Lucie Historical Society float in the annual December parade through downtown Fort Pierce. The 2022 theme was "A Country Christmas." Thanks to SLHS board member Rick Modine for providing and driving the unit.

## Feedback

Here are some recent visitors' comments about the St. Lucie County Regional History Center, compiled from the guest book:

**Bette & Shioban Montage, Hollywood:** "Fabulous History."

**Axel & William, Rio (& Switzerland):** "Very interesting."

**Daniele Desjardins, Quebec, Canada:** Very interesting. Thanks!"

**Alex Correa, Buford, GA:** "An amazing experience."

**Maya Brunel & Daniel Sale, Scotland:** "Amazing collections and fine people."

**Priscilla & John Hagin, S. Car.:** "Marvelous & very well done - a pleasure to visit and delightful guide."

**Luisa Galgari, Florence, Italy:** "Great museum! Thanks."

**Jenna, Brian & Mae Morfeld, Fort Pierce:** "So many treasures! Thank you!"

**John & Marilyn Priest, London, U.K.:** "Very interesting"

**Bob Bailey, Dartmouth, MA:** "Remarkable collection, well displayed!"

**John Feeney, Port St. Lucie:** "Most interesting exhibits!"

*ALICE MICCO SNOW... continued from page 1*

arrive with a personal specialty. Sofkee and frybread were most always there. Children attend and are fed along with the adults. Sometimes hymns are sung as participants sit around the fire.

Death medicine was prepared and placed on the food table for Seminoles to use at the vigil. They were to sip it or wash their faces with the liquid. It had been treated with the words and songs of an Indian medicine man. Additionally, palm fronds would be used to sweep the yard where the relative had died to protect inhabitants from evil.

This vigil may be kept several days or at least until interment, a fire glowing the whole time. The sense of community prevails. A friend or relative will contact the Indian doctor to find out what herbs are to be used in the healing concoction.

Someone like Alice who knows about the plants will gather them to take to the doctor. Medicine is not good unless the Indian doctor has sung the ancient songs that empower the solution with power to heal. These songs are only passed down by a doctor to a protégé or a parent to a child. They are not written and are quite long.

Alice and I would wait in a doctor's living room or in her car while he would blow air into the container and sing the songs

Alice would take me on trips with her to collect the medicine. We would drive along many roads looking for a likely place to find them. Once she stopped on the road and pointed out a tree in a pasture. She instructed me how much to collect and on what side to collect the leaves. "Oh, yes -- about that barbed wire fence." She would help me maneuver the strands while offering me a stool to reach the branches.

When we got home from collecting, she would shave the bark from the willow (*akwanv*) and cut the bay leaves or other herbs into a size small enough to put in a clean gallon milk jug. She would fill the jug

with water and the solution was ready to be fixed by the Indian doctor. This always required a drive to faraway reservations.

At the Indian doctor's home or at an agreed upon meeting place we would patiently await the completion of the doctors sing of the songs over the mixture. After the medicine was imbued with its powers, she would take it to the house of the deceased and people would already be gathering and setting up the area.

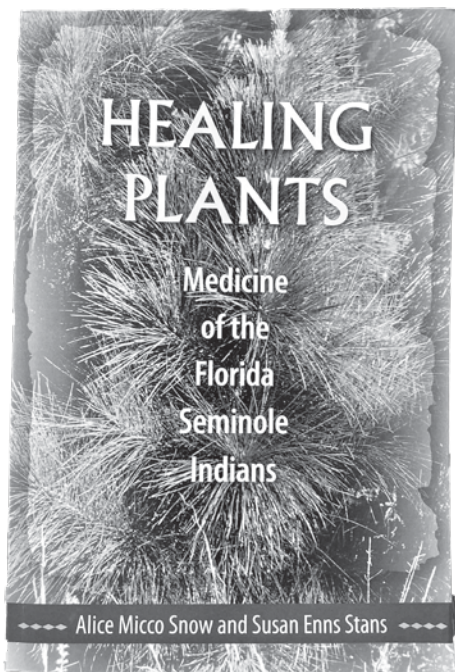
No cash was exchanged in enlisting the Indian doctor's help, however tradition allowed that four yards of fabric be required as a courtesy for his work. The material was the kind used in making the beautiful vests, jackets, and skirts which were made and sold for income or given to loved ones.

Another medicine that did not have the western equivalent in mainstream treatments was "on the wagon" medicine. This is viewed in the community as quite strict. If a person was drinking too much or was viewed as having a problem, usually his or her mother would seek out someone like Alice to get the correct medicine and have treated. Instructions on using it would be a prerequisite for all medicine. Wagon medicine was no different and everyone took the cautions seriously. The instructions

for this one were "Don't drink for one year." All in the community were to take this seriously thus helping the patient. This medicine had been fixed by the Indian doctor.

After a few excursions to visit Indian doctors, I became curious about the plants and the different concoctions. I said, "You should write a book." She replied, "I already have." As she pulled down a well-worn yellow pad of her notes. I told her I could help her, and she agreed.

I would assist Alice with finding the botanical name and common name of the plants. I helped her



*The Healing Plants book produced by Alice Micco Snow and Susan Enns Stans was an important contribution to knowledge about traditional Seminole medicine.*

*... continued on page 5*

*ALICE MICCO SNOW... continued from page 4*

write down the Creek words for each specimen. All this was done on a computer.

I would learn about the properties of some of the herbs. Willow or akwanv had use to western medicine. The bark had acetaminophen as found in aspirin. I also found that other central American Indians had revealed the curative element quinine, required for malaria. Because of the practicality of this testing, pharmaceutical companies would be interested in the medicine of all indigenous cultures' practices and try to gain that knowledge. Unfortunately, sometimes unscrupulous companies would take the information and not return remuneration to the communities they studied.

Another frequently used herb in Seminole medicine is *Persea borbonia* or red bay (*tolv*) which grows wild in Florida. It is as popular in Seminole healing culture as in America, Spanish and Italian

cooking as bay leaves.

Alice and I visited Indian doctors at different reservations as well as the Cherokee community in North Carolina. She was always looking for different remedies and ideas. We even dug sassafras in Oklahoma and purchased ginseng where it is used in other places since certain plants were hard to find locally.

What an adventure we had! Although she knew that Seminole people might disapprove of her writing down what she knew about the medicine, she had the foresight to know that now there would be a record for posterity.

Alice Micco Snow died in 2008. I shall always remember bouncing over dirt roads, walking to swampy places and searching everywhere to find each herb. An adventure and friend for a lifetime. Δ

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## Remembrances

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### Rupert N. Koblebard III

Prominent area attorney **Rupert Neis "Koby" Koblebard III**, part of a much-admired family in Fort Pierce's downtown development, died Nov. 30, 2022 at age 81. He was born Aug. 20, 1941. While growing up in Fort Pierce, he ushered at his grandfather's Sunrise Theatre. A 1959 graduate of Dan McCarty High School, he earned degrees in agriculture, economics and law at the University of Florida.

He practiced law with local firms and also was legal counsel for the Fort Pierce utilities Authority. He was president of the St. Lucie County Bar Association. He also was a cattle rancher.

He was predeceased by his parents, **Mary Laura Sample** and **Rupert Neis Koblebard, Jr.** He is survived by his wife, **Barbara Charlene Wilson Koblebard**, plus five daughters, three sisters and 12 grandchildren.

### Alice Luckhardt

Much-admired local historian **Alice Luckhardt** died Dec. 4, 2022 in Martin County at age 72. Arriving from Miami in the 1970s, she taught in local schools and became so interested in this area's

history that she developed into one of the Treasure Coast's most devoted researchers of the past.

With her husband **Greg Luckhardt**, who survives her, Alice Luckhardt earned acclaim for hundreds of "Historical Vignettes" published in area newspapers. She also was a leader in developing the Stuart Heritage Museum and the author of four books.

### Peter Van Brunt

One of the St. Lucie County Regional History Center's most knowledgeable and popular volunteers, **Peter Van Brunt**, died Nov. 28, 2022 at his Port St. Lucie home following several years of declining health.

Though his family released no other details, it is known that he was born and raised in the New York City area and had a long career as an accountant and administrator for agencies handling financial grants in Latin America.

Until relinquishing his museum duties during the 2020 Covid pandemic, Peter Van Brunt was always witty and well-informed, one of our best tour guides. Δ

St. Lucie Historical Society, Inc.  
P O Box 578  
Fort Pierce, Florida 34954

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Please join us in preserving our local heritage for future generations.

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Spouse's Name \_\_\_\_\_

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City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Home Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

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Cell \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

I/We wish to join the Society at the level indicated below.  
Membership is from September through August.

New  Renewal  Individual (\$20.00)

Family (\$25.00)  Business (\$50.00)

Please make checks payable to:

St. Lucie Historical Society, Inc  
P O Box 578

Fort Pierce, Florida 34954-0578

For Information telephone: (772) 461-8020

**General Meetings are held at:**

**The Elks Lodge**

**635 South 5<sup>th</sup> Street**

**Fort Pierce, Florida 34950**

Society General Meetings are held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of the month, from September through May. A meal is provided before the meeting at the price of \$14.00 per person. Reservations must be made for these meals no later than two days in advance of the meeting. To make reservations telephone (772) 461-8020 and leave a message. Reservations and your RSVP information by e-mail to: dinner@stluciehistoricalsociety.net. Dinner begins at 5:30 P.M. and the General Meeting Starts at 6:00 P.M.

**Volunteers are Needed**

If you have 3 1/2 hours that you can give once a week either in the morning or afternoon, please consider volunteering at the Museum.

Admission, to the museum, for St. Lucie Historical Society members is **FREE**. So come and take a tour.

The latest exhibit is St Lucie Families-Crafters of Local History.

The Pineapple Patch Gift Shop has a large selection of books of Florida historical value, cards, handmade Seminole Indian dolls, and baubles made by volunteers.

**Museum Hours:**

Tuesday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.