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GRETSAS GAMBLES ON FASTTRACK FIX



By Eric Berkowitz

Fort Lauderdale Building Services Department Headquarters

When City Manager George Gretsas took the reins in Fort Lauderdale, he explained his plan of action for rehabilitating the City's operational machinery. Fort Lauderdale's administrative systems had deteriorated to the extent that they were non-responsive to efforts by City officials to coordinate a recovery from the recently disclosed budget crisis. Gretsas was charged with revamping Fort Lauderdale's table of organization. From the outset, Gretsas acknowledged that every City Department would be carefully evaluated and redesigned to include accountability and merit-based advancement. Department heads were put on notice from day one that responsibility accompanied control. While they were given the opportunity to implement their jurisdictional strategies free of outside micromanagement, they also had to show results.

The City Manager's success in organizing the various municipal appendages was remarkable. One by one, city departments became responsive and efficient. Police, Fire-Rescue, Finance and Parks have all undergone administrative improvements reflected internally by improved morale and externally by positive public feedback. There is one glaring exception. The Fort Lauderdale Building Department was identified

by Mr. Gretsas upon his arrival as needing significant improvement. He applied for a permit for some construction and experienced first hand the withering frustration that Fort Lauderdale residents and contractors have long known.

He watched hopefully as the Building Department moved to new headquarters at 700 N.W. 19th Avenue. As time passed, little improvement was realized. He supported Department Chief Valerie Bohlander's efforts to make the department more responsive. Unfortunately, the Department was overwhelmed by an exponential increase in permit applications for repairs from two years of hurricane devastation. Every Fort Lauderdale construction effort, from installing a window to building a home, was belabored by months of waiting for permits and inspections. The city had done away with the simple "walk through" permit they used to issue for small jobs. To apply emergency triage to the hemorrhaging Building Department, Gretsas was forced to consider outsourcing services historically performed in house. While allowing certified professionals to oversee construction inspections would expedite the process, the city stood to lose direct control over the adequacy of the end products.

Continued on page 5



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Gretsas...Continued

circumstances warrant." On March 16th, City Manager George Gretsas explained to the Galt Mile Community Association Advisory Board his intention to implement a "premium" permitting initiative to help "jump start" the ordinarily dilatory process. While confident of the program's viability, Gretsas confirmed Commissioner Teel's trepidations, depicting the FastTrack measure as "a pilot program." Gretsas admonished, "If it results in shoddy construction or unsafe conditions, we're going to have to re-evaluate it."

This plan places responsibility for the private engineer's and/or architect's work product squarely on the owner or applicant. Upon receiving notification from the applicant that the project or some component thereof has been privately certified as code-compliant, the City will spot check the construction's adequacy. The results of these "spot" inspections supersede those of the private engineer or architect. As explained in the Building Services "FastTrack" section of the City of Fort Lauderdale web site, "All inspections performed and certified pursuant to

this policy are at the exclusive risk of the owner or applicant. A failed inspection subsequent to private certification could lead to a stop work order on the entire project depending on the particular inspection." An applicant colluding with an engineer to "overlook" violations could conceivably be made to dismantle substantially completed construction, irrespective of the expense in time and/or resources. As stated by Mr. Gretsas, if he is confronted by too many inspection "inconsistencies", the program will pass into the alternate universe he characterized as "reevaluation".

To learn more about the new program, call the Building Department at 954-828-5973 or visit the Building Services Department's web page entitled "FastTrack Building Inspection Program" •



City Manager George Gretsas



Broward Rules Board Compliance Chief & BOAF President William Dumbaugh

Teel...Continued

Improving City Infrastructure – Significant City resources will be expended in an effort to improve city infrastructure. Constructing new fire stations, improving city facilities, roads and medians, dredging canals, and upgrading water, sewer and stormwater assets will be a major focus in the upcoming year.

I hope the above information has been helpful. Although this is just a snapshot of the objectives and initiatives which will be taken this upcoming fiscal year more information can be provided. Please feel free to contact me with any questions or suggestions. I can be reached at 954-828-5004 or cteel@fortlauderdale.gov •

The Galt Mile News

The Galt Mile News is the official newsletter of the Galt Mile Community. Published 12 times a year, this publication is designed to educate the Galt residents of neighborhood-oriented current events and issues, and to offer residents Galt-specific discounts from various local merchants.



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THIS MONTH AT-A-GLANCE

SEPT/OCT 2006

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
10 Urban Outdoor Gourmet Market 1201 E. Las Olas Blvd. 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.	11 Marlins V NYM Dolphins Stadium 7:05 p.m. Tix.: ticketmaster.com	12 Marlins V NYM Dolphins Stadium 7:05 p.m. Tix.: ticketmaster.com	13 Marlins V NYM Dolphins Stadium 7:05 p.m. Tix.: ticketmaster.com	14 Rent Broward Center Tix.: 954-462-0222	15 Jazz on the Square The Village Grille Commercial Blvd. & A1A 7 p.m. Info.: 954-776-5092	16 Int'l Aroid Show & Sale (Through 9/17) Fairchild Tropical Garden 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
17	18 Vice Mayor Teel Pre-Agenda Meeting Beach Community Center 6 p.m. Info.: 954-828-5033	19 Ft. Lauderdale City Commission Meeting City Hall 6 p.m.	20 Disney on Ice Bank Atlantic Center Tix.: ticketmaster.com	21 GMCA Advisory Board Meeting Pa DeGennaro's 11 a.m. River Daze River ouse Restaurant 6 to 9 p.m.	22 First Day of Fall Jazz on the Square The Village Grille Commercial Blvd. & A1A 7 p.m. Info.: 954-776-5092	23
24 Fiesta Ft Lauderdale Las Olas Riverfront 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Info.: 954-527-0627	25	26 Marlins V CIN Dolphins Stadium 7:05 p.m. Tix.: ticketmaster.com	27 Marlins V CIN Dolphins Stadium 7:05 p.m. Tix.: ticketmaster.com	28 Marlins V CIN Dolphins Stadium 7:05 p.m. Tix.: ticketmaster.com	29 Jazz on the Square The Village Grille Commercial Blvd. & A1A 7 p.m. Info.: 954-776-5092	30
1 Sunday Jazz Brunch Riverwalk, Downtown FL 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Info.: 954-828-5985	2 Vice Mayor Teel Pre-Agenda Meeting Beach Community Center 6 p.m. Info.: 954-828-5033	3 Ft. Lauderdale City Commission Meeting City Hall 6 p.m.	4	5	6 Jazz on the Square The Village Grille Commercial Blvd. & A1A 7 p.m. Info.: 954-776-5092	7
8	9	10	11	12 Columbus Day	13 Jazz on the Square The Village Grille Commercial Blvd. & A1A 7 p.m. Info.: 954-776-5092	14

A look ahead

October 20 - November 12 Ft Lauderdale Film Fest, Info.: www.fliff.com

October 23 Eric Clapton, American Airlines Arena

November 4 & 5 Las Olas Home & Garden Show Las Olas Blvd., Info.: 954-563-0714



Gretsas...Continued

Municipal building departments in Broward are answerable to the County's Board of Rules and Appeals, which authorizes permitting and inspection procedures. On April 20, 2006, they passed Section 109.12, amending Chapter 1 of the 2004 Florida Building Code, allowing the use of private inspectors rather than city inspectors to facilitate critical roof repairs. Broward municipalities such as Sunrise, Coconut Creek, Coral Springs and Plantation adopted the policy to help residents dispense with the hundreds of blue tarps installed to temporarily protect storm-decimated homes. To cure Fort Lauderdale's dilemma, inspection authority would have to be outsourced at unprecedented levels, allowing outside entities to certify slabs, trusses, bar joists, columns, doors, tie beams and foundations. After reviewing Fort Lauderdale's more drastic plan, the Broward County Board of Rules and Appeals approved it forthwith. Speaking to the County's rationale, Rules and Appeals Chief Structural Code Compliance Officer and President of The Building Officials Association of Florida (BOAF) Bill Dumbaugh stated, "This is just the emergency situation that's developed since Hurricane Wilma that's thrown Fort Lauderdale into a very bad situation."

In May 2006, the Building Services Department launched the Expedited Plan Review Program (EPRP). For applicants willing to pay a premium of \$75 an hour to have their plans reviewed by authorized outside experts, they can shave 10 to 30 days off the process, depending primarily upon its scope and complexity. The full spectrum of review is available, including electrical, plumbing, mechanical, building, zoning, landscape and engineering services. Smaller projects can be estimated and started immediately while more complex jobs require a 48 hour review period to approximate costs and timetables.

Gretsas recently assigned Assistant City Manager Stephen Scott to help Bohlander oversee the new "expedited" permit process and otherwise streamline the ailing Department. On June 24th, the Department was opened on Saturdays for permit pickups and started allowing approved permits to be mailed out upon receipt of payment by telephone. To complement the EPRP, the Department instituted the "FastTrack Building Inspection Program" to comparably enhance the inspection process.

Under the FastTrack system, professional architects and engineers will be permitted to perform a wide variety of building inspections previously limited to building department personnel. They are:

- Bar joist - City-approved shop drawings must be on job site at time of inspection
- Column - City-approved spot survey must be on job site at time of inspection
- Curtain wall - City-approved shop drawings must be on job site at time of inspection
- Door - City-approved product approvals must be on job site at time of inspection
- Door bucks
Floor sheathing
Foundation - Certification of soil compaction must be on job site at time of inspection
- Garage door - City-approved product approvals must be on job site at time of inspection
- Grade beam - Pile log and location must be on job site at time of inspection

Continued on page 9

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As you know, you don't get much for \$300,000. That's \$2,000 a month principal and interest, and another \$1,000 a month for taxes and insurance. Taxes and insurance are running over 50% of the monthly payment right now. Please help! We really do not want to leave.

—R.B., Hollywood, Florida

Often, many taxpayers wait until it is too late to fight a proposed tax hike. On average, properties in Broward County increased approximately 19% in market value this year over the previous year. As property owners, that means you made a great investment. But as taxpayers, that same news has other financial consequences. For non-homesteaded properties, it means your taxing authorities (i.e., School Board, County Commission, City Commission, hospital district board, etc.) will potentially collect 19% more in property taxes this year unless they sharply cut your tax rates.

Here's an example: If a taxing authority cuts the millage rate by 5%, that would still equal a 14% tax hike (19% tax base increase - 5% rate cut = 14% tax hike).

Remember the Property Appraiser's Office does not set your tax rates. If you want to protest your proposed tax amount, or the non-ad valorem fees and special assessments, you must contact your elected officials who serve on these boards and commissions and/or attend the public hearings. Broward County School Board public hearings are August 1st and September 7th at the KCW Administration Building. The Broward County Commission public hearings are September 12th and September 26th at the Broward County Governmental Center.

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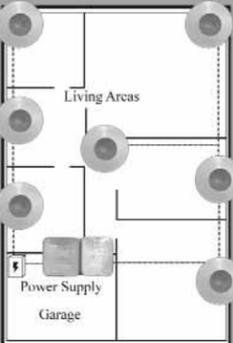
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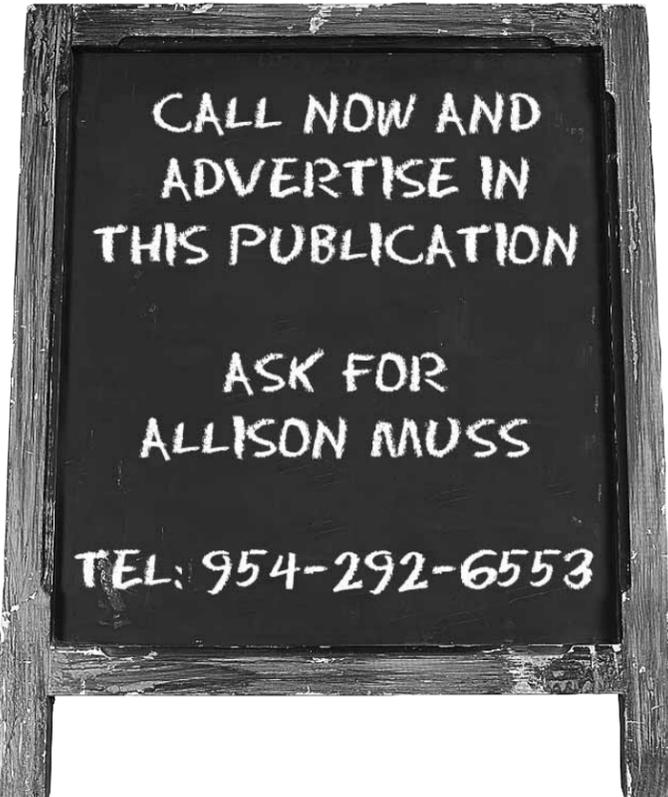
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Teel...Continued

The proposed budget addresses the five major objectives that were identified by the Commission in a goal setting session with the City Manager: (1) Improve the City's Financial Position, (2) Improve Quality of Life, (3) Plan for the City's Future, (4) Improve Neighborhoods, and (5) Improve City Infrastructure.

1. Improve City's Financial Position – Last year's hurricane season highlighted the importance of maintaining a healthy fund balance. It is expected that somewhere between \$8 to \$10 million will be drawn from the fund balance to cover unreimbursed hurricane costs and emergency operations preparedness initiatives.

Even with these unforeseen expenses, it is estimated that by the end of the present fiscal year, the City will have an available fund balance of \$31.9 million. This was made possible through the implementation of strict budget accountability and spending control measures.

Other efforts to improve the City's financial position include stabilizing property taxes, increasing outside funding sources, increasing revenues from business enterprises, and exploring cost saving initiatives.

2. Improve Quality of Life – The finances of the City are vital, but they are only the means to an end which is to enhance the quality of life for those we serve in Fort Lauderdale. First and foremost is the reduction of crime. This year a Police Action

Plan was put into place resulting in a marked decrease in crime. However, there is still much to do in the coming year. Other initiatives include improvements to Building Services, Code Enforcement, Public Works, and the Fire Department.

The City's barrier island is the cornerstone of our tourism industry and one of our economic pillars. Proposed improvements at the beach will enhance the city's position as a tourist destination and fuel an important City economic engine.

Reduction of nuisances such as illegal dumping, excessive motorcycle noise, sign ordinance violations, maintenance of street closures, aggressive panhandling, and beautifying newspaper box locations are some of the small but important issues which will be addressed.

3. Plan for City's Future – Efforts include North US 1/Federal Hwy master plan, Riverwalk Plan, Streetscape Guidelines, Downtown Master Plan Amendments, Beach Business Improvement District, Parks Master Plan, Traffic Management Plan, Water, Sewer & Stormwater Master Plan, Economic Development Plan and other projects.

4. Improving Neighborhoods – Numerous efforts to improve neighborhoods are proposed for the upcoming year including increasing Neighborhood Capital Improvement (NCIP) funding, extending the sidewalk maintenance program, completing hurricane repairs to public property in neighborhoods, and completing NCIP grant projects.

Continued on page 18

Gretsas...Continued

- Mop on (tile roofs)
- Pool steel - Certification of soil compaction must be on job site at time of inspection
- Roof in progress (flat roofs)
- Roof sheathing
- Slab - Certified letter of soil treatment and certification of soil compaction must be on job site at time of inspection
- Steel (docks and seawalls)
- Shingle (in progress)
- Storefront - City-approved spot survey must be on job site at time of inspection
- Tie beam - City-approved spot survey must be on job site at time of inspection
- Tile (in progress)
- Tin cap
- Truss - City-approved shop drawings must be on job site at time of inspection
- Wall sheathing - City-approved spot survey must be on job site at time of inspection
- Window buck
- Window - City-approved product approvals must be on job site at time of inspection
- Wire lath -

Subsequent to each inspection, the professional architect or engineer will sign and seal a letter documenting that the work was found to be in compliance with the applicable code. The letter must be attached to any required supporting documentation (i.e., City-approved shop drawings, soil compaction certification, spot surveys, product approvals, etc.) and left on the job site for review and verification by visiting City inspectors.

The new plan also expedites permitting. The historical protocol determining how the Planning and Zoning Department and the Building Department organize plan review is governed by a "zoning first" policy. This means that no other reviews (i.e. electrical, mechanical, plumbing, building, engineering and fire safety) can be scheduled until the plans have been approved for zoning and landscaping purposes. To relieve this bottleneck, the plan review process was modified, allowing all staff reviews to be performed simultaneously instead of consecutively. Notwithstanding, the permit must still pass every review before being approved, including zoning or landscaping. Upon successful completion of the process, the clerk will call customers; take payment over the telephone and mail out the approved permit.

Acknowledging that the program is somewhat susceptible to abuse by unscrupulous applicants, City Commissioner Christine Teel explained, "The department will continually audit and spot-check this work, and assures us that it is a safe and effective method to address the current permit backlog. This program will be monitored regularly by a high-ranking member of the department and can be terminated at any time if the

Continued on page 18

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TURTLE MAGIC



Phyllis Carter

Eric Berkowitz

On July 14th, Playa del Mar resident Phyllis Carter awoke to experience one of those surprise thrills unique to beachfront homeowners. Every Galt Mile resident has blankly gazed at the ocean horizon, overwhelmed with awe by the natural beauty in our backyard. Despite the relative brevity of these intermittent "Discovery Channel" moments, they serve to remind many of us why we moved here to begin with.

Ms. Carter's early morning rendezvous with one of the Galt Mile's longtime native legacies inspired an email to friends and neighbors describing her witnessed incident. To underscore her delight, she entitled the email with a phrase lifted from the libretto of "The Music Man". It reads as follows:

"A BEACH EVENT RIGHT HERE IN RIVER CITY"

"This morning at 7 AM I noticed the turtle tracks in the sand on our beach and by the time I got my camera, a team of 'turtle conservationists' were upon the scene to do their thing. They worked very carefully to locate the eggs, each creating a hole in the sand with their bare hands until the eggs were found. When that was determined, two remained while the others continued up the beach in search of more turtle tracks.

Each egg was gently removed and placed in one of those buckets in a bed of sand and my guess delivered to a sanctuary of some kind for protection. Such an amazing event. About midnight Tuesday and Wednesday I had seen people on the beach with flashlights and now the mystery is solved. They must have been on the look for turtles but this turtle outsmarted them and delivered in her own time, unobserved.

Then the team circled around the site repeatedly to disguise the tracks and excavation. So cooooo! Felt like I was watching a NOVA special.

**Later,
Phyllis"**

Operating under the aegis of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Marine Turtle Program, "Turtle Teams" have several possible objectives. Some are licensed to protect the nests on site through an assortment of venues such as caging or, if necessary, move the eggs to beaches more appropriate as safe nesting sites. They consider an assortment of factors including coastal littering, beach furniture, nearby construction, seawalls (coastal armoring), and beach lighting that could be misinterpreted as moonlight and lure disoriented hatchlings away from the ocean.

Other authorized teams have permits to perform research surveys and gather data. The state of Florida, through the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's Fish and Wildlife Research Institute, coordinates two sea turtle monitoring programs: the Statewide Nesting Beach Survey and the Index Nesting Beach Survey. The Statewide Nesting Beach Survey (SNBS) program was initiated in 1979 under a cooperative agreement between the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Its purpose is to document the total distribution, seasonality and abundance of sea turtle nesting in Florida.

Continued on page 13



Marine turtle

Turtles... Continued

They track the nesting habits of five species listed as either threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act; the loggerhead (*Caretta caretta*), the green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*), and the leatherback (*Dermochelys coriacea*), the hawksbill (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) and Kemp's ridley (*Lepidochelys kempii*). The Index Nesting Beach Survey (INBS), a monitoring program performed in conjunction with SNBS, was established to measure seasonal productivity, allowing comparisons between beaches and between years.

The data from these surveys provided strong support for the beach renourishment currently underway in Broward County. Miles of vanishing Marine Turtle nesting habitat that fell prey to tidal erosion is being restored. Additionally, the Biological Resources Division of the Broward County Environmental Protection Department (EPD) carefully timed the project to avoid dredging and shore restoration activities during the sensitive nesting season.

After reading Phyllis Carter's prosaic tribute to an event she characterized as "amazing", I casually imparted her anecdote to several friends and neighbors. Universally, they smiled knowingly and agreed that "enchantment on call" was an unexpected benefit of life on the Galt Mile. I requested her permission to publish the email. Her response was couched in concern for the fate of our endangered carapace-covered neighbors. She wrote:

"It was such an event for me but old hat to many that I emailed it to on the Mile. I found it fascinating as did my family and friends up North. I am on turtle watch every morning but alas, my view is limited to our two buildings (Playa del Mar and Regency Tower - editor). I am sure that this is happening all along the coast line. Actually the eggs were laid in front of your building as the site was just past your first set of cabanas. I know they are a protected species but I'm not familiar with the laws governing them so it would be nice to mention that if you like."

Thanks, Phyllis, I think you just did!

Phyllis Carter is the editor of the Playa del Mar Newsletter. Along with Harriet Healy, Richard Solewin, Lance Shaw and a host of other contributing Playa del Mar residents, she created and now fuels Playa del Mar's new vehicle for keeping her neighbors "in the know". Their handiwork can be seen on the Playa del Mar web site at <http://www.playadelmar.net> or go to the Galt Mile Community Association web site (www.galtmile.com), click on "Associations", scroll down to Playa del Mar and click again! - Editor-



Turtle Team prepares rescued eggs for transfer from Galt Mile Beach

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COMMISSIONER CHRISTINE TEEL'S B U D G E T N E W S L E T T E R

Commissioner Christine Teel represents the residents of District 1 on Fort Lauderdale's City Commission. As the Galt Mile neighborhood's voice in City government, Commissioner Teel has tirelessly fought to advance our interests as part of a progressive city-wide agenda - a difficult balancing act under the best conditions. Her bi-weekly pre-agenda meetings, held in preparation for the following day's City Commission meetings, are vehicles she created to solicit direct input from her constituents. In addition to equipping the Galt Mile Community Association with information about recent and/or impending municipal events and decisions, she publishes a newsletter designed to communicate directly with every district resident. A political veteran of Fort Lauderdale's fiscal decline and recovery, she is keenly aware of our interest in the City's budgetary intentions. In July, City Manager George Gretsas proposed a budget describing how - and for what - our tax dollars will be distributed. On August 17th, she emailed constituents this "snapshot of the objectives and initiatives which will be taken this upcoming fiscal year." **READ ON... - editor**



Commissioner Christine Teel

FROM THE DESK OF COMMISSIONER CHRISTINE TEEL

It's that time of year again to adopt an annual budget. The City manager presented his proposed budget in July for the fiscal year which will begin October 1. Appropriations by department within fund and tax levies are adopted in September. This year the first meeting will be held on Wednesday, September 6, a day later than usual due to the Labor Day holiday. The second meeting for final approval will take place Tuesday, September 19. Both meetings are at 6 pm at City Hall. You are invited to attend and participate.

Continued on page 12

just sold

Information provided by Eastside Properties, 954-565-7644

Twelve more properties were sold in the Galt Ocean Mile Community:

Regency South #1201

(2/2)
\$550,000 - closed 7/19/2006

Playa Del Sol #1010

(2/2)
\$480,000 - closed 8/10/2006

Coral Ridge Towers North #302

(2/2)
\$315,500 - closed 8/9/2006

Ocean Riviera #1607

(2/2)
\$530,000 - closed 7/27/2006

Coral Ridge Towers East #114

(1/1)
\$122,500 - closed 8/15/2006

Ocean Summit #1507

(01/1)
\$367,500 - closed 7/28/2006

The Galleon #514

(3/2 1/2)
\$650,000 - closed 6/23/2006

Riviera #1601

(2/2)
\$590,000 - closed 6/22/2006

Galt Ocean Club #1614

(1/2)
\$390,000 - closed 7/20/2006

Coral Ridge Towers #1222

(2/2)
\$360,000 - closed 7/14/2006

Plaza South #27A

(3/2 1/2)
\$902,500 - closed 6/30/2006

Galleon #1210

(2/2)
\$530,000 - closed 6/23/2006



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**HELEN QUINLAN
A Celebration of Life...**

Helen Quinlan defied logic. The gentle nonagenarian with an encyclopedic recall of the Galt's history was one of our community's treasures. Helen graced former Directorial Boards in Regency Tower with her charm, even temper, wit and wisdom. Helen was a chronic contributor. Adjunct to her time, effort, and energy, she contributed to the Regency Tower newsletter and maintained her own "Poem and Joke" page on the Regency Tower web site. As the Galt Mile Community Association's Secretary through 2004, Helen made myriad unrequited contributions to the Neighborhood Association's Board of Directors. Her civic conscience was exemplary and her unique wit made knowing Helen a remarkable experience. The "angel of Regency Tower", Helen had the sweetest disposition in South Florida. If someone needed to be "charmed", Helen was called.

While Helen professed her life's "secret" as keeping a healthy sense of humor, her REAL secret was that she didn't reflect light... she created it. Helen passed away on July 26th. May she rest in peace.

Helen's funeral took place in Chicago, where she was interred adjacent to her beloved husband, Roy. A Memorial Mass was held on August 10th at 10:00 AM in St. Pius X Church at 2511 N. Ocean Boulevard (A1A).

Following the Memorial Mass, a brunch in celebration of her life took place in the Rendezvous Room at Regency Tower condominium (3850 Galt Ocean Drive, Fort Lauderdale). The brunch started at 10:45 AM and was well attended by scores of friends, family and neighbors whose lives she touched. The dozens of condolence emails received were forwarded. •

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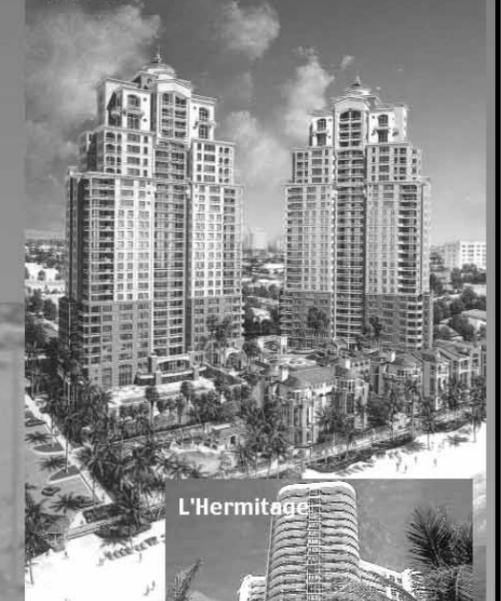
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