



NEW OWNERS REUNITE STEINHATCHEE STAPLES

By DEBRA BUTLER
Contributing columnist

Steinhatchee River Inn and River Haven Marina have been reunited as one property, brought back together under a single name by a husband and wife team who are no strangers to Steinhatchee.

Rob and Barbara Lewis – the proud new owners

of the former River Haven Marina – have owned Steinhatchee River Inn, directly across the road and “up the hill” from the marina, since April of 2016.

Little did they know when they purchased the inn almost five years ago that their adventure was just beginning.

In 2016, Rob gave his six

months’ notice to Marriott, and Barbara began making preparations for their move from Pompano Beach.

One year later, the family began their official move to Steinhatchee by both land and by sea – or at least that was the plan.

Reminiscent of the fictional Old-Florida classic by Robb White, “The Lion’s Paw” – Rob and their son Ben set out on the trip of a lifetime aboard their 24-foot Sea Sprite sailboat “Seahorse” in the midst of a scorching Florida summer.

Meanwhile, Barbara and their daughter Abbie, along with the family dog Honey, piled into their packed van for the five-and-a-half-hour drive to Steinhatchee from Pompano Beach.

Rob and Ben’s voyage took them through the Everglades, the Keys and up the west coast with nothing but a recycled five-gallon pickle bucket for a



Rob and Barbara Lewis – proud new owners of the former River Haven Marina – took over Steinhatchee River Inn in April 2016 and later moved to Steinhatchee with their two children, Abbie and Ben, along with their beloved dog, Honey.

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latrine. “It was hot and muggy. I don’t advise sailing around Florida in the summertime,” said Rob.

It was along the west coast where the father and son pair encountered a storm that ripped their sails. Taking shelter in Venice, Rob sought help in having the sails repaired.

Those repairs would take a month to be completed, so Rob was forced to rent a car so that he and Ben

could finish their voyage to their new home.

On their first visit to see the inn, the Lewis family not only fell in love with the property, but the town of Steinhatchee as well.

With both having

→ Please see page 9

Christmas Eve mullet memory

Editor’s note: Poem courtesy of Valena Driggers of Steinhatchee Bait and Tackle.

’Twas the night before Christmas,
Winds hard out the south.
Six weeks they had waited,
Dallus Creek....at the mouth.
The mullet were coming,
With white roe and with red.

While visions of a spawning orgy,

Danced in their heads.
High tide approached.
The fish shack roof made a clatter.

The wind had turned west.
The rain spit and spattered.

The lightning gave a clap.

The tide going out.
The wind had turned northwest.

Mullet poured towards the mouth.

The moon on the water,
Showed the ball of fish galore.

“They’re coming out now!”
Yelled a man from the shore.

One of the men shouted,
“BOYS, CHRISTMAS IS HERE!”

Now let’s fill up these bird dogs.”

And the other men cheered.

As they fired up their Mercury’s,

Their Johnson’s and Evinrude’s,

The nets were thrown from the decks.

The circles they made were not few.

The nets were pulled up,
The fish were thrown in the bottom.

The haul was spectacular.
They finally had caught ‘em.

The fish were enough,
For a great Christmas feast,

With enough left to share with even the least.

The net days have passed.

Memories are all that remain,

But on this Christmas Eve,
Dallus Creek is the same.

Merry Christmas to all.

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'BLESSING OF THE FLEET' FRIDAY

STEINHATCHEE INN

Continued from page 6

a background in the hospitality business, the move from Pompano Beach to owning an inn in Steinhatchee seemed like a good fit.

Rob was a general manager for Marriott, and Barbara, before having children, worked as a director of sales and marketing.

"Rob was a great boss. Everybody loved him. He knew how to do it all from top to bottom and because of that earned respect from his employees," Barbara said.

"He could do everything from laundry, to the front desk, to cleaning the pool," she added.

"I've never asked anybody to do something I wasn't willing to do myself," said Rob.

The two fell in love, married, had two children and lived in Pompano Beach for 20 years.

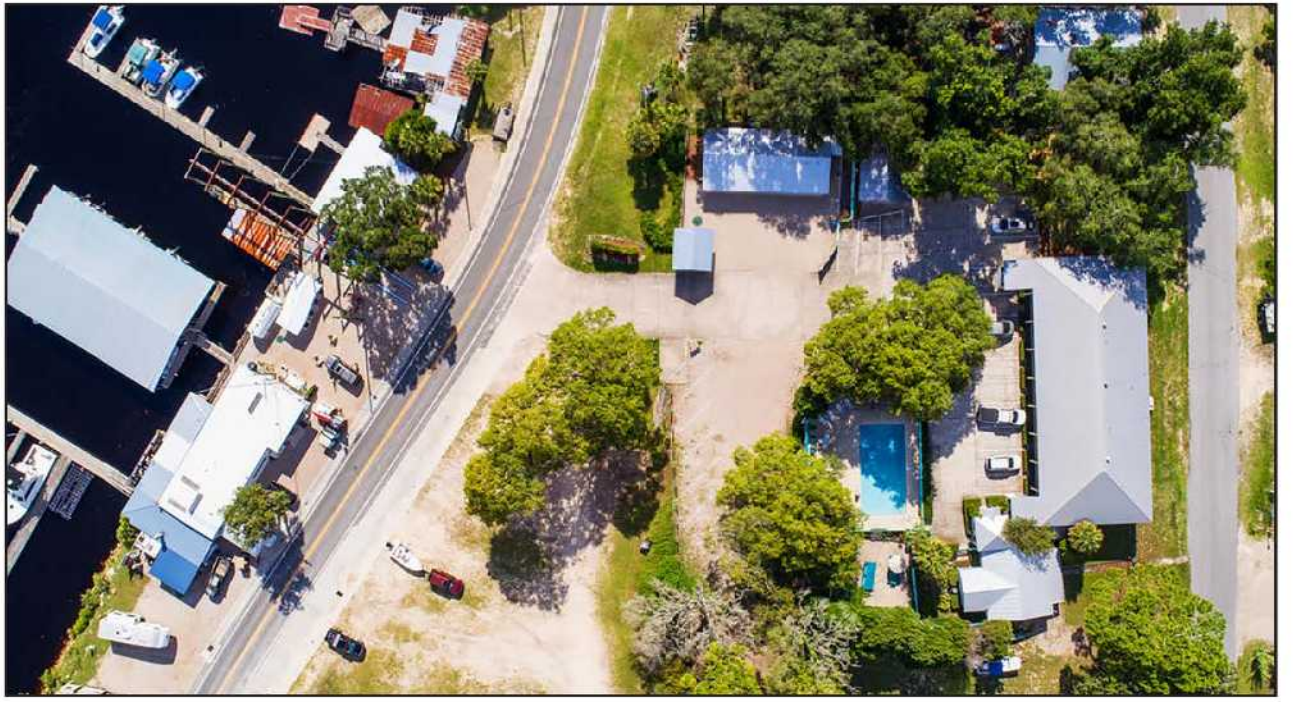
Although they have been a part of the Steinhatchee community for almost five years now, the Lewis family has recently been thrust into the spotlight as the new owners of River Haven Marina.

By purchasing the marina and its related properties in December 2020, they can now offer much more to their vacationing guests.

The newly-renamed Steinhatchee River Inn and Marina now has a total of 17 suites (six with kitchens), four motel rooms, a two-bedroom waterfront cottage with its own dock and a total of six RV spots.

All vacationing guests now have the option of reserving a boat slip for an additional fee, as well as other amenities such as access to the pool and grilling area.

The eatery located behind the marina -- previously known as the "Back Porch" -- has typically only been open during scallop season, but Rob and Barbara plan to eventually have the restaurant open year round to offer room deliveries to their guests and give locals additional dining



The newly-renamed Steinhatchee River Marina, with a boat lift and docking, is shown at left with the Steinhatchee River Inn (right) located just "up the hill."

options.

Rob is a former U.S. Navy serviceman, fisherman and diver, but had never been scalloping until their move to Steinhatchee.

He loves that scalloping is such a family-friendly activity.

"I've done a lot of diving down in the Keys, and wreck dives in the Atlantic, and this was just so easy," Rob said.

Within the last two years Rob has also obtained his captain's license and now

enjoys spending his early mornings chatting it up with the other captains at the marina.

Barbara's marketing and hospitality skills fit perfectly with her role of running the inn, advertising and assisting guests with reservations.

Charities are dear to her heart, and in the past she and Rob have helped train two individuals with special needs through the Special Olympics organization of Taylor County.

They patiently taught the "housemen" the basic skills of sweeping, making beds, laundry and other aspects of housekeeping until the two were able to graduate on to other jobs.

The Lewis family would like to do more of that, "but the biggest obstacle with that was transportation," said Barbara.

Sometimes the workers would have to wait for up to two hours after their shift for the public transportation van to pick them up. Barbara has also reached out to Autism Anglers, a 501c3 non-profit organization, in hopes of offering them representation through the marina to raise autism awareness.

The Lewis family will host a "Blessing of the

Fleet" ceremony on Friday, Jan. 1, at 5 p.m. at the marina.

Barbara feels this would be a good way for the couple to commemorate the new year and their new business venture by having all boats associated with the marina -- and any other vessels whose owners may be interested -- blessed by their pastor.

"We want to start off

thanking God. We couldn't have done any of it without Him. Boating can be so dangerous. We just want to bless the boats -- anyone's boat -- bless the business and start off in the right direction," said Barbara.

Local boat owners are invited to attend. Cake will be served after the short service, and beer and wine will be available for purchase.



A view of the pool area at Steinhatchee River Inn shows some of the total of 17 suites (six with kitchens) and four motel rooms available for rent.



Hunts honored for dedication

The Steinhatchee River Chamber recently recognized Jim and Joyce Hunt of Fiddlers Restaurant, as well as Tim & Shari Powell of River Haven Marina and Motel, for their many years of dedication to the community. "We wish them well in their much deserved retirement!" chamber members said.

Booking Desk

Editor's Note: It is the policy of this newspaper to run the names of all those arrested and booked at the Taylor County Jail. All those listed below have been charged with a crime, but are considered innocent until proven guilty.

Oct. 11:
Ivan Jerome Curtis, 36, no address given, poss. of cntrl. subs. without prescript., \$5,000 bond, Ptl. Mitchell, PPD.



Curtis
Myron Maurice Howard, 40, Lamont, Fla., battery on LEO, \$3,000 bond, Dep. Cruse, TCSO.



Howard

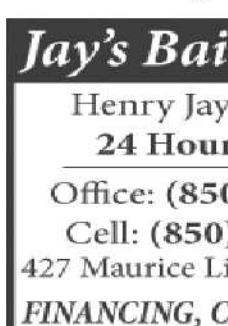
Christopher A. Wynn, 32, Perry, Fla., sell meth., \$1,000 bond, Ptl. Cephus, PPD.



Wynn
Coty Allen Hartsfield, 30, Perry, Fla., VOP, no bond, Dep. Reams, TCSO.



Hartsfield
Oct. 12:
Jessica Leigh



Leigh

Weatherly, 27, Perry, Fla., drug equipment poss., poss. of meth., \$2,000 bond, Dep. Cruse, TCSO.



Weatherly
Patricia Elaine Parker, 49, Perry, Fla., poss. of drug paraphern., out-of-county warrant, \$7,000 bond, Dep. Reams, TCSO.



Parker

Stacy Marie McClellan, 34, Perry, Fla., marijuana poss. (-20 grams), MTV (unauthorized permit to drive), drug equipment poss./use, \$2,000 bond, Dep. Cruse, TCSO.



McClellan
Tammy Darlene Perry, 49, Perry, Fla., aggravated assault with deadly weapon without intent to kill, \$2,000 bond, Ptl. Phelps, PPD.



Perry

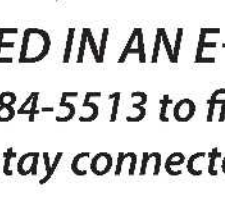
Oct. 13:
Richard L. Estey, 39, Panama City, Fla., VOP, no bond, Sgt. Sexton, TCSO.



Estey
Joshua Wade Coxwell, 20, Eastpoint, Fla., trespassing on property, resist LEO without violence, \$4,000 bond, Ptl. Chaffin, PPD.



Coxwell
Oct. 14:
Bryckoski J. Jackson, 30, Perry, Fla., two counts



Jackson

of sell synthetic narcotic within 1,000 feet of place of worship, business or school, drug equipment poss., \$47,000 bond, Ptl. Cephus, PPD.



Jackson
Makayla Hagan, 20, Greenville, Fla., smuggle contraband (introduce into detention facility), poss. of cntrl. subs., VOP, no bond, Dep. Dorman, TCSO.



Hagan

Dominic L. White, 38, Perry, Fla., battery, VOP, no bond, Ptl. Wimberley, PPD.



White
Christy Nicole Waldron, 42, Perry, Fla., FTA (felony warrant), \$200 bond, Dep. Reams, TCSO.



Waldron
Oct. 15:
Kyle Carter, 30, Tallahassee, Fla., FTA, \$400 bond, Dep. Thigpen, TCSO.



Carter

Achilles Bradley Mantzanas, 26, Perry, Fla., violation of injunction of domestic violence protection order, obstructing justice (tampering in third degree felony proceeding), \$65,000 bond, Ptl. Maily, PPD.



Mantzanas
Derek Ryan Kelley, 38, Greenville, Fla., VOP, no bond, Dep. Harden, TCSO.



Kelley

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