



As told to Jim Curry—© 1973 Cary Publications, All Rights Reserved - "The Loxahatchee Lament"



W. Carlin White— Mayor, Jupiter

Father came to Jupiter at the turn of the century to install the first wireless direction finder for the Navy. It augmented the functions of the Lighthouse and was one of three in the state. The others were at Jacksonville and Key West. Here he met my mother and eloped with her in 1905 and two years later I was born.

As a boy growing up, activity centered around the railroad bridge, the lighthouse, and the inlet. Swimming, rowing and fishing were the sports. [Bower's Store](#), the boarding house, and the depot were located near where the railroad bridge is now. They were on pilings to accommodate boat traffic. [U.S. 1](#), a single lane dirt road from West Palm Beach, passed here on its way to New York. This small area was the focus of life in Jupiter.

From May to November the days were trying. Hordes of mosquitoes were fought unsuccessfully with smudge pots. Most houses had a brush hanging at the door to brush the insects off.

In 1927 I returned to Jupiter after an absence of several years in Nicaragua where my father was stationed. I had been educated in Spanish down there and had to return to Jupiter High School for graduation. I noticed when I returned that the use of boats for transportation

had just about disappeared. Automobiles had arrived and families couldn't afford both. Besides, even when power boats were a necessity they were cantankerous, undependable things.

We fished in rowboats using mostly tarred hand lines. Few could afford rods and reels. The hand lines were heavy with tar and could be thrown accurately even in the dark.

When the big hurricane of 1928 hit, it stranded a Dr. Stroud of the state board of health who was en route to Tallahassee with a load of serums. It was fortunate he was here since the Red Cross didn't arrive for two days. We set up a clinic at the elementary school and gave inoculations for tetanus and typhoid. There was some loss of life in West Jupiter.

Several children were killed in a school building that collapsed. Some adults in West Jupiter died also. Everything that was here was destroyed. Homes were lost. I recorded the scenes with an early model movie camera that I had.

I used the movie camera a lot. In 1929 I was out on Capt. Frank's charter boat near the railroad bridge

taking pictures when a train approached an open span. The train hit the open bridge, the engine took the draw span off its pins and went in the water. I had my camera in my hand and watched the whole thing happen -- without taking a picture.

The Loxahatchee River moved with a lot of force in those days. The incoming tide rarely moved further than the bridge due to its force. It came in slower than it went out. We were apprehensive about being on the river on an outgoing tide for fear of being swept out the inlet.

In winter, ducks would cover the surface of the water as they stopped at night on their way south. Geese would stop, too. Sometimes wild geese would join flocks of tame birds. Wild turkeys occasionally would mingle with tame flocks and stay. I remember meeting bear on the beach which were hunting turtle eggs, just as I was. There was a lot of wildlife. When the mullet were thick, they would keep us awake at night. Each time the beam of the lighthouse would pass it would startle the mullet



HEALTHY CYPRESS? -- 50 years ago big cypress up the Loxahatchee looked as much as it does now (1973). It was never lush, except for the moss hanging from bare branches.

into a cascade of splashing. We got oysters from Peck's Lake. In early fall we would gather thousands of oysters and put them under the dock for Grandmother to use in meals at the boarding house.

Man has changed the flow of the river. The building of the bridges has constricted its flow. The Alt. A1A bridge reduced the opening by half. The tide never moved into the river past the bridges until about 15 years ago. Now on a daily basis the green water can be seen past Pennock Point. I don't recall catching bluefish except for strays beyond the bridges until the past few years.

To restore the river we would have to remove the impediments to its flow. Take out the oyster bars, fallen bridges and other wreckage that has fallen in. I'm not



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an expert. We're thinking about something that will take 20 years to prove right or wrong.

The river is misunderstood by a lot of people. I don't remember the big cypresses up around the Girl Scout camp ever being lush. They weren't healthy 50 years ago. I have a feeling, too, that the role of the mangrove is misoriented. It was put by nature to collect debris, to prevent flow and to stop rivers.

Bulkheads are a river's enemy. Japan forbids vertical bulkheads. Beaches have the function of keeping water clean. Debris washed on beaches is purified and dried by the sun. No bulkheads -- no pollution. Look at canals with vertical bulkheads; they are examples of pollution. We must work with nature. The word pollution means: unwarranted effect of man's activities.