



April / May -- 2009

Retired Sergeant Receives Medal

It felt like any other call - at first. But things got out of hand fast, and before he knew it, bullets were flying, says retired Key West Police Department Sgt. Adam Bittinger. He



recalls entering an empty, barricaded hotel room. He remembers the moment he first realized that not only was someone in the room, but that the person was armed.

"All I could see was this hand coming out of the bathroom door and a gun," said Bittinger.

That hand began firing and Bittinger was shot in the line of duty on June 14, 1998.

The American Police Hall of Fame has now awarded Bittinger its Police Legion of the Purple Heart Medal "in recognition of the grievous injuries sustained while in the performance of duties as a law enforcement officer..."

Retired Officer Frank Lalama, who was with Bittinger the day of the shooting, was on hand while Police Chief Donie Lee presented the award. Bittinger, who now works for the Department as its

accreditation manager, says Lalama saved his life that day when he fired on the gunman. Lalama received the Medal of Honor for his role in the incident.

These days Lalama directs the Police Athletic League, working to better the lives of Key West kids. Bittinger is humble and surprised by the recognition. Looking back to the aftermath, he remembers, "the Department was totally supportive, and I appreciate that."

He recalls driving to another call, still bleeding from the head wound inflicted by the shooter, then driving himself to the hospital. Despite that cool exterior, though, he admits a certain amount of satisfaction in the knowledge that the perpetrator is now serving two consecutive life sentences.

PAL Summer Camp

Key West kids from kindergarten through 5th grade can enjoy the Island Life Summer Camp available beginning in July, thanks to the Police Athletic League.

The camp is being held at Key West High School from July 6 through the 31st, Monday through Friday from 7:30 until 5:30.

Kids will enjoy arts and crafts, swimming, field trips, tennis, karate, picnics, horses, soccer and other games.

For further information, contact Capt. Tez Water at 305-395-5205 or Lt. Kathleen Ream at 305-809-1009.

New Transfer Station Nears Completion

After 18 months of construction, May 15 will see the ribbon-cutting for the city's new solid waste transfer station on Rockland Key.

The new Class 1 facility is coming in under its \$7.9 million budget. The state-of-the-art transfer station replaces the aging Southernmost Waste to Energy facility on Stock Island, providing the capacity to handle the city's needs for at least the next several decades.

The City Commission started the ball rolling on this project in 2004, directing staff to replace the Stock Island facility on city-owned land on Rockland Key. By late 2007 the contract was let to contractor D.N. Higgins.

CITY OF KEY WEST

Mayor

Morgan McPherson

mayor@keywestcity.com

Commissioners

District 1: Bill Verge

bverge@keywestcity.com

District 2: Mark Rossi

mrossi@keywestcity.com

District 3: Dan Kolhage

dkolhage@keywestcity.com

District 4: Barry Gibson

bgibson@keywestcity.com

District 5: Teri Johnston

tjohnston@keywestcity.com

District 6: Clayton Lopez

clopez@keywestcity.com

City Manager

Jim Scholl

jscholl@keywestcity.com

Questions? Comments?

If you have information for the next City newsletter or would like to see something added to the publication, please contact Communications Manager Alyson Crean at acreat@keywestcity.com. This newsletter is a publication of the City of Key West.

Vandenberg Comes to Key West



Key West Mayor Morgan McPherson, Commissioner Bill Verge, Commissioner Teri Johnston and Commissioner Barry Gibson were all on hand for the arrival.



A happy crowd watched from the docks while the Vandenberg was eased up alongside the seawall at the Truman Waterfront. Currently crews are readying the ship for sinking, removing doors and cutting holes in its sides. Final inspections are also underway to assure complete environmental safety.

A smiling City Commissioner Bill Verge was on hand April 22 as tugs eased the 523 foot ship into Key West Harbor. Verge's name is nearly synonymous with the project as he's worked with a myriad of partners on the future dive destination.



Key West Firefighters Do Their Duty



Firefighter battled a serious structure fire at 512 Duval Street on March 9. Three businesses succumbed, but the nearby San Carlos Institute and Margaritaville reopened within hours.



The following Sunday -- on March 16 -- another major fire broke out, this one at the Sheraton Suites on South Roosevelt Blvd. Crews had it under control quickly, and within a couple of hours most hotel guests were able to return to their rooms.



The San Carlos Institute gave a special thank you to the Key West Fire Department for keeping the historic structure safe. Alex Vega, San Carlos Administrator Alejandro Pascual, Arnold Caballero, Fire Chief David Fraga, Michael Budde, Manny Pichardo (holding plaque), David Zarate, Dr. Rafael A. Penaver -- president of the San Carlos Board of Directors, Carlos Garcia, Tattoo Del Valle, Robert Malone.

The plaque will hang in the building's lobby permanently.



City Manager Jim Scholl, Commissioner Barry Gibson, Mayor Morgan McPherson, Commissioner Mark Rossi and Commission Bill Verge were all in for a late night as they watched the firefighters battle the blaze.

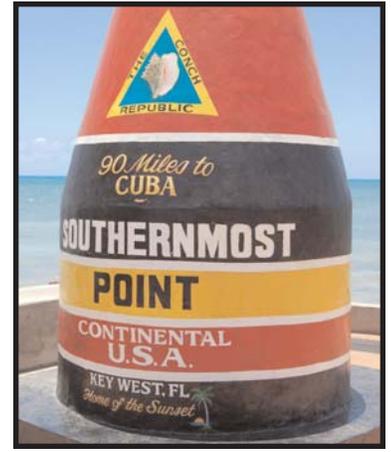
The Key West Police Department's Mounted Unit helped with crowd control as the hotel was evacuated at the height of spring break.





Southernmost Point Gets Facelift

Continuing work at the Southernmost Point has given Key West's most photographed landmark a new lease on life. Landscaping, including sabal palms and crinum lilies have been planted along the roadway, and a new paintjob has removed the scars that accrue each year on the bouy that marks the spot.



Comcast Director Lucy Mularz adjusts City Manager Jim Scholl's mic during a City Beat! taping with IT Director Patti McLaughlin. The show airs twice a week on Comcast Channel 5 and on the city's own Channel 77. Check your guides for times.

TELEVISED PUBLIC MEETINGS

- City Commission: April 7
- HARC: April 14
- Planning Board: April 16
- HARC: April 28
- Code Compliance: April 29
- City Commission: May 5
- HARC: May 12
- City Commission: May 19
- Planning Board: May 21
- HARC: May 26
- Code Compliance: May 27

Key West Ambassadors Class 12 Graduates!



They've studied hard, learning in detail what makes city government tick. At the May 5 City Commission meeting at Old City Hall, Class 12 of the Key West Ambassador's Academy collected their diplomas.

"Now you're equipped to go forth and represent our fine city," said City Manager Jim Scholl as he handed out the certificates to each participant.

Scholl also praised Dave Oatway, the volunteer coordinator of the program, for his excellent work. When the academy first began in 2003 it was overseen by the city manager. In 2006 Oatway took on the duty. He has helped coordinate session in which

future city ambassadors learn about every aspect of the city, from budgets and technology to touring the waterfront and riding along with police officers.

Since its inception, the class has been built on the concept of building a stronger community through an educated citizenry.

Class 12, which started in January, had over 20 participants. The next session of the Ambassador's Academy will begin in July.

Graduates of Class 12 of the gathered on the steps of Old City Hall after receiving their diplomas.