



2017 movies

We take a look at the best and the worst according to our critic Dan Hudek. **C1** ▶



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IN MEMORIAM

The Lives they Led

Evelyn Jackson **Bartley**
1920 - 2017



Julie **Balink**
1965 - 2017

Albert Edward **Amend**
1930 - 2017



Patricia Ann **Barrett**
1947 - 2017

Walter O. **Sheppard Jr.**
1920 - 2017



BY EVAN WILLIAMS

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IT'S A TRADITION AT FLORIDA WEEKLY TO LOOK BACK AT THE lives of local people who died during the course of a year

and reflect on who they were. My task was to find those with connections to Lee County. Aside from that, there was no criteria or agenda. I was guided mostly by my own wandering interests as well as expediency, or who was available to talk about their lost loved ones, as I looked through obituaries online or searched my email archive. The Lee County Black History Society helped me find two subjects. One I had known personally in the restaurant business. I did not choose these subjects at random, but I also wanted to be surprised. Everyone has a story to tell,

SEE LIVES, A14 ▶

Annual homeless count just a snapshot, experts say

BY ROGER WILLIAMS

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Next month, within a few days of Donald Trump's one-year anniversary as the nation's chief executive — which supporters will celebrate at a bash at Palm Beach's Mar a Lago — volunteers in Palm Beach County will fan out on a single night to count the homeless.

And not just in Palm Beach County, but in Lee, Collier, Charlotte and every other region in the state, along with roughly 3,000 cities and counties across the nation. All of



it is part of a "point-in-time" census conducted each January by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and

assisted by thousands of volunteers in state planning agencies.

This annual count, loosely organized in Florida by the state's Council on Homelessness, not only records numbers of homeless men, women, children, veterans, people with disabilities, and so on, but it reflects problems county-by-county as well as statewide: lack of affordable housing, for example, or rising rents without rising salaries.

As it happens, minimum wage in Florida will increase by 15 cents, to \$8.25 per hour,

SEE HOMELESS, A21 ▶

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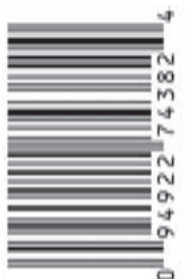
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COUNT ON



KEEPING YOU CONNECTED.



LIVES

From page 1

and to some extent I wanted to reach blindly into the stream of history and pan for gold. I'm happy to have found it with each of these subjects.



Evelyn Jackson Bartley

August 3, 1920 - October 29, 2017

THE DEW-DROP-Inn Soul Food Restaurant was located just across the railroad track that is the boundary for Fort Myers' black Dunbar neighborhood. It once occupied a popular spot on Anderson Avenue, then Dunbar's prime business district (now Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard), and served all kinds, from migrant day laborers to baseball stars.



BARTLEY

From the mid-1950s to the early 1970s, former employees and friends recall, the restaurant was owned and operated by a tenacious businesswoman named Evelyn Jackson Bartley.

"Peggy" Gloria Houston Evans was a server and full-time employee from 1957 to 1962.

"When the Pittsburgh Pirates baseball team began their winter training in Fort Myers, Evelyn was contracted to feed the black players," wrote Ms. Evans, who was also Ms. Bartley's neighbor and friend, in a remembrance this fall. "This included the famous Roberto Clemente."

The Pirates trained in Fort Myers from 1955 to 1968. Ms. Evans remembered helping Mr. Clemente, a Puerto Rican who was learning English, pronounce the word "salt," holding up a shaker as a visual aid.

Although everyone from both sides of the track were welcome at her restaurant, the era's "Jim Crow" laws made it illegal or impossible for blacks and whites to do things such as drink from the same water fountain, go to the same schools, and eat at the same restaurants. Those laws slowly began to change with the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Ms. Bartley rented the space for the restaurant at first. Later she bought it outright, tore it down and erected a more modern building, which itself was later torn down.

She served breakfast, lunch and dinner, beginning work at 3 a.m. and ending between 9 and 11 p.m. every day, Ms. Evans said.

Her customers could sit at counter stools or along the wall in a row of booths. There was a glass case to display baked goods, the menu written on a chalkboard each day, and a jukebox that played soul music such as Aretha Franklin and Sam Cooke.

When the restaurant opened in the mid 1950s, the daily weekday special was one meat, two veggies, rice and a cornbread muffin for 52 cents. The price eventually rose to 62 cents.

Annie Bell Farmer was the head cook. Ms. Farmer's daughter, Dwilda Farmer Blandenburg, 65, worked at the restaurant along with her siblings after school and on the weekends when she was a girl.

Ms. Blandenburg, a Dunbar resident who was also Ms. Bartley's goddaughter and later her caretaker, listed many of the menu items in her memory: stew beef, smothered or fried chops, lima beans, rice and collard greens. chitlins on Saturday, smothered stew chicken, chicken and dumplings, black eyed peas, potato salad, oxtails, baked coon, hog head cheese, ham hocks, iced tea, lemonade, peach cobbler, sweet potato pie and bread pudding.

"She was a helluva cook," Ms. Blandenburg said.

"She had a taste for luxury ... That's what she worked for, to have the best that life could offer her."

burg said.

Among the customers were seasonal black workers from sharecropping farms, who came to the county from north Florida, Alabama, Mississippi and Georgia.

"Many of them made Fort Myers their home," said Ms. Evans, whose own family came from a sharecropping community in Lamont; now she lives in Virginia Beach, Va. "That's one of the large ways the black community became populated."

If life in Fort Myers wasn't easy, it was a chance to travel and eventually escape the sharecropper life with little if any opportunities for education or advancement.

"At least they had the freedom of making choices, and even though it might be on the back of a truck they got to travel and see a little bit of the United States before they decided they wanted to settle in Fort Myers," Ms. Evans said.

She added that they made contributions to the education system, "And every area of life and culture out in the Dunbar Heights area. They didn't all remain day laborers."

Ms. Evans recalled the workers coming in early for breakfast. She would hand them already prepared sack lunches. Some of them couldn't read, so Ms. Bartley told the servers to "make it like home" for them — learn their orders to save them the embarrassment of trying to make out what was on the menu. The workers typically paid by the week.

"And they graciously tipped us," Ms. Evans said.

In the Dew-Drop's early years, she recalls Ms. Bartley and her first husband riding a bicycle to the restaurant. She kept running the restaurant after they separated.

Though she eventually remarried, she never had children, was known to be meticulously careful with her money and rarely took time off. When she did, she loved to travel.

"She had a taste for luxury," Ms. Evans said. "That's what she worked for, to have the best that life could offer her. She did the cruises — and oh, I was just so happy for her. You know when you find a person who works hard for what they get, not looking for a handout and then they do well, to really enjoy the fruit of their labor. It brings joy to my heart."

Ms. Bartley eventually built her dream home in Cape Coral and retired with her husband there in the early 1970s. The Dew-Drop ended up attracting business from both sides of town, black and white, said Ms. Blandenburg. Her mother continued to cook and run it for a while after Ms. Bartley left.

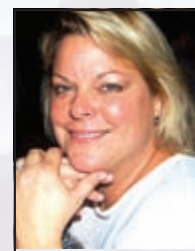
"We had people coming from all across the track eat at that restaurant," she said. "And everybody was welcome. It was the number one outstanding restaurant, and they held for many moons."



Julie Balink

September 5, 1965 - October 19, 2017

I met Julie Balink after I got a job in 2006 as a server at H2, a restaurant that she helped her husband, Chef Harold Balink, run in downtown Fort Myers. She managed the front of the house on many afternoons and nights, and like him could be tough and candid, as well as fiercely loyal, which seemed to make them a good match, even though it meant their love could be tem-



BALINK



COURTESY PHOTO

Evelyn Bartley is shown with a friend in New York.



COURTESY PHOTO

Professional baseball player Roberto Clemente.



COURTESY PHOTO

Julie Balink is pictured with friends at Cru.

“She was worried about everybody else around her rather than herself. Everybody was her biggest concern.”

pestuous. But it was like “When Harry Met Sally” not “The War of the Roses,” and I remember their occasional entertainingly profane arguments were laced with fondness. They were two strong flavors who could give as well as they could take. So even though I’d heard Julie had been diagnosed with ovarian cancer — and saw her for the first time in years (and for the last time) earlier this year at a benefit party, her head wrapped in a dark scarf due to the treatments she was undergoing — it didn’t quite add up that she was gone at age 52. I had assumed she would beat it. And actually, she did, for 39 months.

“The one thing that stands out to me when Julie had the cancer and when she was struggling with it, her biggest concern wasn’t herself but how everybody else was handling it,” said her close friend and former coworker Noreen Roche, 53. “You know she was worried about her daughters, me, her sister, Harold. She was worried about everybody else around her rather than herself. Everybody was her biggest concern. And the one thing I always regret: she wanted so much to go to the beach one last time and we never made it and that is one thing I wish we could have done. She was one of the best people I knew in my life and I miss her every single day.”

In 2007 when I was still waiting tables at H2 and had just started writing for *Florida Weekly*, Julie let me interview her for a column called “15 Minutes,” a short profile usually of whoever I wanted to write about that week. I found out she lived in Toledo, Ohio, during the first decade of her life, which she called “the armpit of the United States ... gray and dreary and dirty and the sun never shines,” and that her family moved to North Fort Myers.

Later, she put herself through Edison State College as a server and bartender. I couldn’t imagine then that she would, near the end of her life, go back to school again and become a microbiologist. But she “totally enjoyed” the restaurant and bar business when she was younger.

“It was fun, fast paced,” she told me. “You meet a lot of interesting people.”

Case in point: Harold Balink. Now 47, he runs Harold’s Restaurant, an intimate space off U.S. 41 in South Fort Myers. He met Julie in 1996 at South Seas Resort on Captiva Island, where she had been hired as a manager, and he was a chef.

First impressions:

“I didn’t know anything about her, all I saw was this tall, beautiful, tan blonde, so I was very excited,” said chef Balink.

She thought he was “full of himself.”

“And I was brash and kind of a jerk,” he admitted. “But eventually she saw that I was good at my job and I cared about employees and maybe I was cocky but there was an under layer of nice and she was like, ‘OK, this guy’s not that big of a jerk.’

“It wound up being great. One night we were on the beach at Tween Waters and I gave her a little kiss and that’s it. Maybe she allowed me to give her a kiss. I don’t think I took a kiss, she was too tough, I think she allowed me to.”

While working at H2, she was also raising her two stepdaughters, Kayly and Makenzie, from Harold’s previous marriage. The girls buzzed in and out of the dining room on occasion on the way to or from here or there. Both are now in their 20s.

Julie and Harold loved traveling together: Colorado, Spain, Italy, Greece, France, Mexico “a ton of times,” Grand Cayman, Las Vegas, California, New Orleans, Chicago, New York. There was always another

adventure to be had, until, of course, there wasn’t.

“I guess there’s a million moments, Evan, honestly,” Harold said over the phone early on a Saturday morning a few weeks before Christmas. “But I think what will always be at the forefront is her spirit. You know you see those movies and the husband and wife are fighting and bickering and loving and arguing and whatever, like it seems like endlessly, but the husband’s just endearingly always enamored with her and you know that’s the reason I love (her), it’s the feistiness or whatever, and I think that’s what will always be the forefront is that, God, it was just never a fucking dull moment. You couldn’t ask for more moments to be filled with energy and love and emotion and rowdiness. It was just a fireball. We butted heads so many times on so many things but that’s what made it great, that’s what made it great for sure.”



Patricia Ann Barrett

March 1, 1947-June 28, 2017

“TRULY I TELL YOU, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.” Matthew 17:20



BARRETT

Horace and Patricia Barrett’s devotion to each other began on their first date, a movie and a drive down U.S. 41, and continued during the last 15 years of her life when multiple sclerosis forced her into a wheelchair and then into bed. He loved caring for her. She loved caring for him.

“I did everything I could to make and keep her happy especially in her last years because she was, she was a good wife,” Mr. Barrett said. “She was always by my side.”

Six months after her death, he finds himself adrift sorting through her many things while also making repairs to their long-time home in Dunbar, due to Hurricane Irma in September. In a corner of the living room by a wall of photographs there is a large bouquet of fragile, dried-out roses that he got her for their 46th wedding anniversary on June 26, two days before she died at home, in the bed he had prepared for her year after year. He’s thinking of keeping the flowers, he says, getting them lacquered. It was his tradition to give her a rose for each year they were married.

They first noticed each other one Sunday at Mt. Olive A.M.E. Church in the late 1960s, and shortly thereafter were set up on a date by Mr. Barrett’s friend, Greta Campbell.

Ms. Campbell, 64, recalls being impressed by Ms. Barrett’s independence, this bright young woman on her own in Fort Myers who was still a devout enough Christian to make it to church every Sunday.

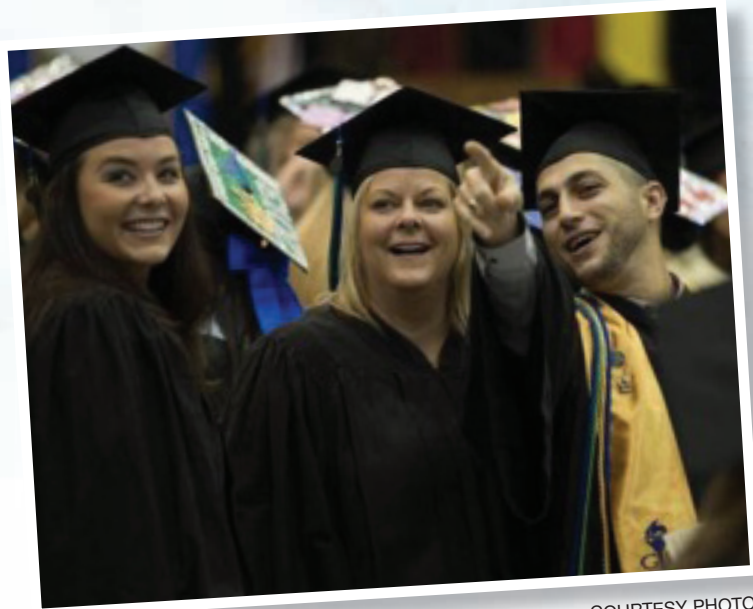
“When she came to Fort Myers as the new teacher I was in high school and I was impressed that as the new teacher away from home she decided to come to Sunday school,” Ms. Campbell said.

When Mr. Barrett arrived at her house for their first date she had just finished waxing the floor so they stood outside and talked under a palm tree before attending a movie (he doesn’t recall which) and driving down U.S. 41 to Naples.

“And I knew she was the one,” he said.

SEE LIVES, A16 ►

“I think on about the second date I asked her to be my wife then, and she thought I was crazy.”



COURTESY PHOTO

Julie Balink celebrated graduation at FGCU.



COURTESY PHOTO

Horace and Patricia Barrett celebrate their wedding.



COURTESY PHOTO

Horace and Patricia Barrett renew their wedding vows in June 2000.

LIVES

From page 15

“She was just an unbelievable amazing lady who had a heart of gold and the faith of a mustard seed, you know?”

“I think on about the second date I asked her to be my wife then, and she thought I was crazy.”

Patricia Ann Manuel Barrett was an elementary, pre-school and kindergarten teacher who had been raised as an only child by her grandparents on their tobacco farm in Lamont, just south of Tallahassee. After graduating from Florida A&M University in 1967, the principal of Heights Elementary School in Fort Myers drove to Lamont to recruit her.

Mr. Barrett said her grandmother told her: “In as much as that man thought enough of you to drive all the way up here, that’s where you should go.”

A family friend and Florida A&M sorority sister with Zeta Phi Beta, Joyce A. Dean, 76, recalled Ms. Barrett’s relentlessly positive attitude in the face of her illness. Ms. Dean had been diagnosed with bone marrow cancer in 1994, and Ms. Barrett’s friendship helped her through the hard days. They nicknamed each other “jelly bean” over their shared love of the candy.

“She was just an unbelievable amazing lady who had a heart of gold and the faith of a mustard seed, you know?” said Ms. Dean. “Because she laid up in that bed for 10 years with MS. Days that I wanted to give up she would say, ‘believe in yourself and your own strength.’”

After the Barretts were married in 1971, there were many years before the symptoms of MS — she started to fall in the classroom — forced her to retire in 1999. They had two children, Kelby Sherrard and Fa’Laysheia Lezanne, both grown.

When Ms. Barrett arrived in the morning at Michigan Elementary School to teach kindergarten the kids knew to quietly start their work. “They knew they didn’t talk to Mrs. Barrett yet because she hadn’t had her coffee yet,” Mr. Barrett said.

The Barretts’ “first child” was a 250-pound St. Bernard named Sir Galahad who they bought at a pet shop in Jacksonville for \$199; the polar opposite of the tiny Chihuahua named Emmanuelle that still lives with Mr. Barrett.

Even before she got sick, they were rarely separated.

“The key thing for us is whatever we did, we did together,” he said. “I did not get tired of being around her. I did not need to go hang out with the boys.”

In her last few years when it became increasingly difficult for Mr. Barrett to take her out, she wanted him to have someone to go to social events with. So, they agreed that a woman who is a close family friend would accompany him instead. Though the relationship wasn’t romantic, there were rumors, which they anticipated.

“She couldn’t go with me but she still wanted me to go,” Mr. Barrett said. “And this is the person she felt comfortable with me going with.”

It was her way of taking care of him, too, and a testament to a rare generosity of spirit.

“She was just amazing to me because most women cannot let you be with another lady going to a party or going to another dance,” Ms. Dean said. “She loved him and she wanted him to have some happiness. If he made her happy then she could return a little happiness back.”

Albert Edward Amend

July 1, 1930 - June 25, 2017

AN EPISCOPAL PRIEST who later joined the Greek Orthodox Church, Albert Amend came from a family that worked in the theater. His grandparents and mother were actors including on a traveling vaudeville act at the turn of the 20th century.

“My mother (Marie) was born on a train crossing the Utah-Colorado border in 1895,” said Mr. Amend’s brother, Charles Amend, who is 88 and lives in Cranbury, N.J.

At 18 months, Marie had a part in the act. She remained an actress until about 1930, when Albert was born in Ohio (and remained a lifelong Ohio State Buckeyes fan). Her husband, also Albert, was a scenic artist and designer who grew up there.

The Great Depression hurt the theater business and in the 1930s the family moved to an Irish neighborhood in the New York borough of Queens. Albert senior hoped to find work with a relative who designed sets for Broadway shows but the family struggled. He got a break when he landed a design job on the Futurama exhibit at the 1939 New York World’s Fair.

“That’s sort of when we came out of the Depression,” Mr. Amend said, “but up until then it was quite awful. It’s a thing you don’t ever want to see again.”

He recalled the fair’s opening parade when the family, including the two brothers and their sister, watched President Franklin D. Roosevelt go by in an open car from their apartment window.

Children of the era also enjoyed greater freedom.

“Al went everywhere the New York subway stations would take you,” he said. “As a little kid, he’d take the subway all the way to Battery Park and then take the ferry to Staten Island and he was only a kid, 12, 13 years old.”

When he got older, Mr. Amend remembered his brother befriending a blind street performer, poet and musician in the Village known as Moondog who dressed up in a Viking costume (his albums eventually became influential and are still in circulation today).

“My brother, naturally, makes friends with him,” Mr. Amend said. “But that’s how he was, he was always friendly with everybody.”

After serving with the U.S. Army, stationed in Germany during the Korean War, Mr. Amend graduated from college and got a job teaching high school in Brooklyn. There he met his wife of 60 years, Virginia. They were married at the historic Episcopal Trinity Church in lower Manhattan and moved to Long Island. After finishing a master’s degree in history and education, he entered a four-year seminary school as a “late vocation.”

Taking on the role of priest surprised his family of theater artists, though they had raised their children in the Episcopal church, a compromise between their Roman Catholic and Lutheran backgrounds, and his name is apt with its combination of “Amen” and “mend.” His wife also came from an Episcopal background.

“In fact, my husband considered himself the dropout from the family,” said Ms. Amend, laughing.

He served a number of parishes including for 17 years at St. Andrews Episcopal Church in Williston Park, N.Y., and later

“My brother, naturally, makes friends with him. But that’s how he was, he was always friendly with everybody.”



The Barrett family.

COURTESY PHOTO



Albert Amend and his wife, Virginia Amend.

COURTESY PHOTO



Albert Amend was an Episcopal priest for a time.

COURTESY PHOTO



AMEND

as a retired priest at St. Luke's in Fort Myers.

His children, Edward Amend and Aileen Fenton, recall him often stopping at hospitals to visit with ailing parishioners, his compassionate sense of humor, and that his hobby, working on clocks and watches, required incredible patience. They remembered his ability to strike up a conversation with anyone, children or octogenarians alike.

"There was nobody who met my dad who didn't instantly like him," Ms. Fenton said. "He was just that type of person."

He also loved classical music. Edward accompanied him to a performance of Wagner in New York maybe 25 years ago.

"I think we went and got some Chinese food and then we went over to Lincoln Center," he said, where they had seats in the nosebleed section and heard soprano Jessye Norman.

The Amends later retired to Southwest Florida and bought a home in North Fort Myers. About 10 years ago, Father Amend and his family joined the Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church in Fort Myers because he was at odds with current Episcopal practices.

A traditionalist, he believed priests should have the choice to marry or not. He also did not accept the ordination of women or gay men as priests.

"He didn't view it as a rights issue," his son said, "but more as a dogmatic theological type issue."

Charles, who is non-practicing, was surprised at first that his brother had decided to become a priest, but says it suited him.

"He was perfect for the role he took," Mr. Amend said. "I couldn't imagine a better person to be a priest than him, for comforting people in their times of need and sorrow. He was a wonderful man..."

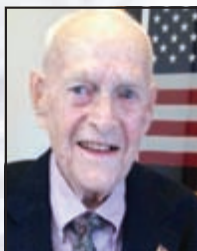
"He was good man. And I have no doubt if there's a heaven, he's there."



Walter O. Sheppard Jr.

June 20, 1920 - July 10, 2017

AN ATTORNEY, STATE legislator and World War II pilot who flew daring rescue missions over the Pacific, Walter Sheppard was also a newspaper delivery boy growing up in Fort Myers with memories of meeting a stern old Thomas Edison.



SHEPPARD

"He was delivering papers on his bicycle and you know how little boys took sticks and would run along a picket fence and hear the tat-tat-tat?" asked his daughter, Carroll Sheppard Duncan, one of his four children. "He did that at the Edison home."

As she tells the story, a black car seating four people — Mr. Edison, Henry Ford, Harvey Firestone and their chauffeur — was coming down the driveway.

"And the chauffeur got out and said, 'young man, Mr. Edison would like you to stop doing that, you are defacing his property,'" Ms. Duncan said.

Her father replied "Yes, sir ... And then Mr. Edison got out of the car and said, 'Son, what's your name?' Mr. Edison was deaf as a post but could read lips."

The boy told the inventor his name and his dad's name.

Mr. Edison said he knew his parents, "And young man, I would really appreciate you never doing that again."

His parents apparently never found out about it, and later in life Mr. Sheppard became board chair of the historic Thomas Edison and Ford Estate, one of the many appointments that made him an indelible part of Old Fort Myers over the course of his 97 years.

A member of the Greatest Generation who practiced its values of patriotism

and service, Walter O. Sheppard Jr. was born and grew up in Fort Myers with his mother, two sisters and stepfather. His dad, also an attorney, died in a car accident when he was 6.

He learned to fly while still attending Fort Myers High School, said his first cousin, de facto brother and war historian John Sheppard. After the attack on Pearl Harbor he enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Forces and was assigned as a flight and gunnery instructor, but Mr. Sheppard wanted combat duty. He got the chance when he responded to a Navy ad seeking 30 pilots to fly rescue missions.

With a six-man crew, Captain Sheppard flew a PBY-5A Catalina rescue plane, a slow, clumsy, amphibious craft that he came to love and called "Super Duck."

"It was considered one of the most dangerous planes to fly in the Pacific theater," his cousin wrote in "Impact," his book about WWI and WWII.

Capt. Sheppard and the crew would land the Super Duck in the Pacific on sometimes stormy 6- to 12-foot swells to rescue fellow soldiers who had been shot down. A sea rescue involved a tricky landing that required skillful improvisation and the use of a "stall drop" procedure: landing at the crest of a swell, sliding down and floating alongside the downed pilot and crew, and then taking off again without tipping the wings into the water.

After the war, Mr. Sheppard established a civil law firm in Fort Myers where he practiced for more than half a century. He was married twice. His first wife of 47 years died in 1993, and his second of nine years in 2006.

He represented Lee County in the Florida House for eight years, where he sponsored legislation to ensure that snook would be designated a game fish.

Fort Myers resident Ted Dickey, 60, became a close friend of Mr. Sheppard in his later years, visiting him a few times a week to talk about the war, Old Fort Myers, politics or just life. Mr. Dickey admired him deeply and said Mr. Sheppard was a hero to him.

"In my way of thinking they don't make them that way anymore," he said.

When it came to politics, he was "old school" and fiscally conservative, Mr. Dickey said.

"He was not a big fan of our prior president. He was definitely a Republican. He didn't like some of Trump's antics, his hyperbole, his rhetoric he did not care for. But he was such a hardline Republican he wanted the party to (be in power)."

Articulate and gregarious, he enjoyed being a litigator, his daughter Ms. Duncan said.

"He loved to be in court."

She recalled he was hired by Lee Ratter as the attorney for his new community of Lehigh Acres, and represented the Lee Memorial Hospital Board for decades. He also represented shrimpers and cattleman, sometimes accepting barter for his fees.

"He considered himself a country lawyer because he would take your case on the merit of it, it didn't matter what your name was," Ms. Duncan said.

He lived in Lake Placid before moving back to Fort Myers in the last years of his life in the historic Edison Park area where he planted guava trees in his yard. When he died, his family planted a guava tree at the Edison home in his honor. ■

"He considered himself a country lawyer because he would take your case on the merit of it, it didn't matter what your name was."



COURTESY PHOTO

Albert Amend served in Germany during the Korean War.



COURTESY PHOTO

Walter Sheppard served in the U.S. Army Air Forces.



COURTESY PHOTO

The WWII Super Duck.



COURTESY PHOTO

Walter Sheppard poses in the 1920s.