

BUSINESS

OCTOBER 28-NOVEMBER 3, 2009

A GUIDE TO THE GREATER FORT MYERS BUSINESS INDUSTRY



EVAN WILLIAMS / FLORIDA WEEKLY

Above: Paul Gladding, a Pine Island crab trapper with one of the stone crabs he catches daily in the Gulf. Below: T.B., a delivery driver for Andy's Island Seafood in Matlacha, with crab claws for sale at the GreenMarket at Alliance for the Arts.

Harvesting stone crabs is hard work, big business

BY EVAN WILLIAMS
ewilliams@floridaweekly.com

Paul Gladding harvests stone crab claws, a delicacy brought up almost exclusively from waters off the coast of South Florida. In spite of a fractured and swollen wrist from a recent slip on his boat — and the fact that Mr. Gladding, 62, could retire comfortably — he went to work on Thursday before sunrise as usual.

Now, just two weeks into the seven-month stone crab season that began Oct. 15, people are clamoring for the claws that Mr. Gladding and other commercial fishermen bring to dinner tables. They are all the more desirable for their seasonality, traditionally served with homemade mustard sauce and drawn butter.

"I'll have people call me up every year and say I want so many pounds of stone



crab claws," said Andy Meltz, owner of Andy's Island Seafood in Matlacha, who gets the claws fresh, cooks them, chills them and sells them to go. "They're very succulent. They're very, very meaty."

In the faint, hopeful glow of pre-dawn light, Mr. Gladding begins to gather the daily harvest, caught in traps sitting

like milk crates on the ocean floor. He stepped from his backyard in Bokeelia into the Spartan crab boat he built three decades ago, Lucky Lady, and pointed her out toward the Gulf of Mexico.

"You have to love the work number one," he said.

Mr. Gladding is grizzled after four decades of such labor. He is tanned and blue-eyed, with cliff-like shoulders and huge, rough hands, two fingers on one of them half-gone from some long-ago accident. His hair is bleached blond from the scorching sun.

He worked relentlessly through the choppy waters of a cloudy morning — hard, rhythmic labor — until the sky and sea both glared with naked afternoon sunlight. Then he worked some more. Mr. Gladding started harvesting

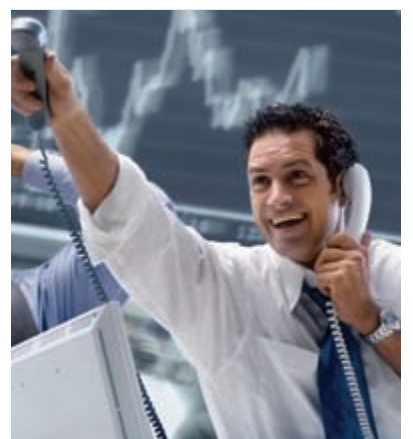
SEE STONE CRABS, B4 ►

WEEK at-a-glance



PR University

And other networking social events in Lee County. **B10 & 11** ►



Money & Investing

Love is in the air. **B3** ►



On the move

Check out what local business men and women are doing in Lee County. **B2** ►

FGCU's Lutgert College named a top business school

SPECIAL TO FLORIDA WEEKLY

Florida Gulf Coast University's Lutgert College of Business is recognized once again as one of the best business schools in the nation according to The Princeton Review. The New York-based education services company features the Lutgert College of Business in the recently published 2010 edition of its Best 301 Business Schools.

Best 301 Business Schools has two-page profiles of the highest-ranking

schools with write-ups on academics, student life and admissions, plus ratings for academics, selectivity and career placement services. In the profile on FGCU, the Princeton Review editors describe the Lutgert College of Business as having a solid preparation in general management, operations, teamwork and doing business in a global economy.

"We select schools for this book based on our high regard for their academic programs and offerings, institutional data we collect from the schools and

the candid opinions of students attending them who rate and report on their campus experiences at the schools," said Robert Franek, Princeton Review vice president of publishing. "We are pleased to recommend Florida Gulf Coast University to readers of our book and users of our Web site as one of the best institutions they could attend to earn an MBA."

Students cited the university's location and cost among the top reasons for attending; students also cited the Lutgert

College of Business as very well established in the local community. In addition, the students praised the professors for their willingness to help students and for the experience they bring to their jobs.

The Princeton Review does not rank the schools in the book on a single hierarchical list from 1 to 301, or name one business school best overall. Instead, the book has 11 ranking lists of the top 10 business schools in various categories.

The lists are available for review at www.PrincetonReview.com. ■

CONFLICTS in the workplace can be COSTLY

RESOLVE Internal Conflicts & Employee Disputes and Grievances **TODAY** to Avoid Expensive Litigation **TOMORROW**.

GCM Solutions Include:

- Mediation
- Investigations of Employee Complaints
- Skills Training & Workshops
- Conflict Management Programs/Design
- Facilitation of Meetings



Keith Grossman, JD
Attorney, Business Owner,
Trainer, Consultant, Public Speaker,
Writer and Family Mediator

Call today for your **FREE** Consultation
239.542.4733



Grossman Conflict Management, LLC.

Transforming the Way Conflict is Managed

1714 Cape Coral Parkway East
Cape Coral, FL 33904

Keith@ResolvingConflictsNow.com
www.ResolvingConflictsNow.com

STONE CRABS

From page 1

the crabs in 1970 in Key West, but they weren't popular then.

"Nobody wanted them," he said. "I peddled them for the raw bars and (other local places)."

Since then, they have exploded into a \$20 million seasonal industry for crabbers in Florida — that number is before they are sold by wholesalers or served by a waiter. Last year, the average dockside price for claws in Florida was \$6.14 per pound, down from a recent high of nearly \$10 per pound in 2006, according to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.

Dockside prices so far this season are hovering just above \$6 per pound, not as much as most recent years. And so far this year, the haul hasn't been as plentiful. Most crabbers say that's because the water is too clear. Stone crabs are less likely to be up walking around into traps unless cold weather fronts muddy up the water, helping them hide from predators.

"It's pretty early to tell, but we're off to kind of a slow start," said Jeff Haugland, who runs Island Crab Company in St. James City, a major wholesale and retail distributor of stone crab claws. "It's like going out fishing. Some days they bite."

Working by himself, Mr. Gladding brought in 150 pounds last week, while a good week yields 600 to 800 pounds of claws. Larger operations can bring in 1,000 pounds per day.

It's repetitive work. As his boat approached each trap, guided by a GPS system, Mr. Gladding used a long-handled hook to grab one of his color-

stone crab statistics

>> In Florida since 2000, the pounds of stone crab claws harvested per year, average dockside value and total value:

YEAR	POUNDS HARVESTED	\$PER POUND	TOTAL VALUE
2000	3.4 million	\$8.2	\$28.3 million
2001	3.3 million	\$6.01	\$20 million
2002	3.2 million	\$7.10	\$22.9 million
2003	2.6 million	\$8.60	\$22.7 million
2004	3 million	\$8.80	\$26.4 million
2005	2.3million	\$9.2	\$21.1 million
2006	2.4 million	\$10	\$24.3 million
2007	3.0 million	\$9	\$26.5 million
2008	3.1 million	\$6.14	\$18.9 million

In Florida last year, the total value of stone crab claws sold dockside, before being sold at restaurants or elsewhere, came to \$18.86 million — the lowest statewide average since 1994, when \$18.67 million worth of stone crab claws were sold.

In 2008, Lee County crabbers harvested 154,467 pounds of stone crab claws. Collier County crabbers harvested 621,064 pounds. Charlotte County crabbers harvested 28,874 pounds.

Source: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

"It's pretty early to tell but we're off to kind of a slow start."

— Jeff Haugland, Island Crab Company, St. James City

crabs thrown back in the water survive. Although most stone crab claws are harvested south of Sarasota and Fort Lauderdale, according to the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, the crabs may be found in waters along the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts as far north as South Carolina.

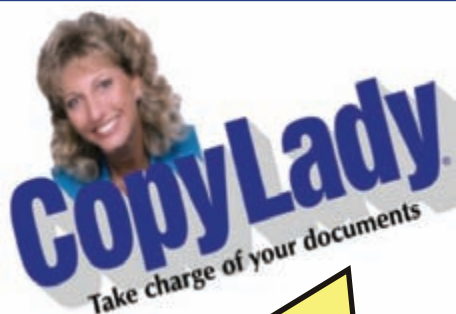
Big business

Last year, the recession may have been the reason the pricey delicacy, sold to consumers for \$14 per pound and up, had a lower value than most recent years.

Statewide, the total value of stone crab claws sold dockside, before being sold at restaurants or to go, came to \$18.9 million — the lowest statewide average since 1994. The greatest dockside value in recent years was in 2000,

coded buoys. Then he wrapped the rope around a motorized pulley system to bring the trap up from the ocean floor and pulled it by hand into the boat. If there were any stone crabs inside, he snapped off their claws, measured to make sure they were the legal 2¾ inches long and tossed them in a bucket of saltwater.

He rebaits the trap with a pig foot and throws the rest of the crab back in the sea where it can regrow its claws. With no claws, about 25 percent of stone



FREE COPIER FOR YOUR OFFICE!



JOIN THE COPYLADY STIMULUS PROGRAM

Nobody has to tell us that the economy has been bad. We know all about it. Some of our clients have gone out of business and we've had to take their machines back.

BAD for them...GOOD for you! WHY? Because we don't know what to do with these great, almost new machines. So...

We'll lend you one ...FREE!

If you're scratching your head saying "What's the catch?" Here it is. All you pay for is the clicks*. That's it.

We own it. We maintain it. You use it.
Call now! Obviously there is a limited supply.

239-939-5383



* Minimum clicks per month required is 3996 @ .025 ea. = \$99.00

CARSMETICS

Express Accident Repair



100% Satisfaction Guaranteed!

- Highest quality - Lifetime guarantee
- Lower than most body shop prices
- Exact computerized color match
- Minor to Major damage on drivable cars
- Free exact price quotes in 10 minutes
- Most repairs done in 24-48 hours
- Bring in all insurance claims & non-insurance claims

Come in for a **FREE EXACT QUOTE** **\$100 OFF**
A \$600 or Higher Repair. Excludes Parts & Tax

FREE Headlight Restoration w/Repair **\$250 OFF**
A \$1000 or Higher Repair. Excludes Parts & Tax

www.carsmetics.com

FORT MYERS • 14420 South Tamiami Trail • (239) 481-4400
NAPLES • 2121 Pine Ridge Road • (239) 596-9494

when \$28.3 million worth was sold by crabbers.

“Certainly, the economy is a factor and availability can also be a factor,” said Grant Phelan, director of operations for Pincher’s Crab Shack restaurants, which is a part of Island Crab Co. There are seven Pincher’s locations from Sarasota to Naples.

Every October, the promise of stone crab claws draws a crowd of diners, who very well may be enjoying a claw Mr. Gladding caught. Almost every day during season, he sells his claws to Island Crab Co. Currently, he gets about \$7 per pound, depending on the size of the claw.

“Each restaurant will have like 10 tables waiting for the crabs to arrive on that first day of stone crab season,” said Mr. Phelan.

Diners at Pincher’s seven locations combined can go through 2,000 pounds of stone crab claws on a busy weekend day. Stone crab claw dinners at Pincher’s restaurant go for \$20 to \$30 along with two side dishes, depending on market price and the size of the claw you get.

Southwest Florida crabbers haul hundreds of thousands of pounds of stone crab claws every year. Lee County crabbers harvested 154,467 pounds of stone crab claws in 2008. Collier County crabbers harvested 621,064 pounds. Charlotte County crabbers harvested 28,874 pounds. Mr. Meltz of Andy’s Island Seafood sells the claws at market prices to go, now about \$14 per pound for mediums, \$18 for large and \$24 for jumbo.

Mr. Gladding has been there for the highs and lows of crab trapping and selling.

He lived on a boat in Key West until he was 10, where his father had a boat salvaging business. Then his family moved



Paul Gladding checks one of his stone crab traps and rebaits it with a pig's foot, left.

EVAN WILLIAMS/ FLORIDA WEEKLY

to Pine Island. Mr. Gladding went into the Navy before becoming a crab trapper. He’s also owned three businesses, including a marina and a hotel, but he likes being out on the water more than

just about anywhere else.

His catch on Thursday, a disappointing one, was enough to cover his daily expenses (about \$100) and pay him around \$50. Mr. Gladding looked down

at the yellow bucket with about 30 pounds of stone crab claws — the result of that day’s hard work.

“A bad day on the water is better than a good day on land,” he said. ■

50%

of the companies
recognized on *Gulfshore
Business Magazine’s*
“Top 76” list
have enlisted our
legal guidance.

Numbers that mean
business in Florida.

Henderson Franklin is a full service provider of legal services to the Southwest Florida business community. Our attorneys work closely with clients to resolve legal challenges and develop relationships based on trust, knowledge and strategic planning.



Numbers that mean business to YOU.

239.344.1100
Fort Myers

239.498.6222
Bonita Springs

239.472.6700
Sanibel

henlaw.com

Henderson Franklin is one of the largest and oldest locally based full-service law firms in the Southwest Florida region. Providing clients with the experience and insight of 55 skilled attorneys in 16 practice areas.

Appellate Law • Banking & Financial Institutions • Business Organizations & Planning
Commercial Litigation • Construction Law • Divorce, Marital & Family Law
Employment Law • Estate Planning & Administration • Health Care Law • Intellectual
Property Law • Land Use & Environmental Law • Mediation & Arbitration • Real Estate Law
Tax Law • Title Insurance Claims • Tort & Insurance Law • Workers’ Compensation Law