



# Florida Black Bear Scenic Byway Newsletter

A National Scenic Byway

October 2011 Issue: 3 Vol: 4



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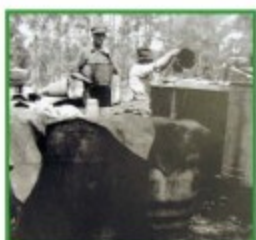
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## Scrambletown – a story of survival through good times and bad.

By Tom Rose

Photos provided by Betty McDonald, Richard Mills, Diana Rose, and The Florida Archives  
George Jones Song, White Lightning

*Well the "G" men, "T" men, revenuers, too  
Searchin' for the place where he made his brew  
They were looking, tryin' to book him, but my pappy  
kept a-cookin' Whshhhooh . . . white lightnin'.*



Scrambletown 'still' in operation

Life was not easy in the United States in the first half of the 20th century. The country went through two world wars and bounced into and then climbed out of a depression. Life in the Ocala National Forest could be even tougher. People

worked hard to eke out a living from the land, the forest, the lakes and rivers. When night fell there was little in the way of formal entertainment. They might

gather on someone's porch to visit for an hour or so before an early bed time. One such evening, probably in the 1920s, a group was sitting around with a lady visitor from the north. From out of the darkness came a



Ocala National Forest moonshiners load truck.

sh o u t ,  
"REVENOORS!"... "It's those gol dang REVENOORS AGAIN!"

The women disappeared into the house, the men into the woods. Cars were started and roared off into the black night. The northern visitor declared that she had never seen such scrambling in her life, you people are always scrambling. "This place should be called Scrambletown." Well, it did fit and it stuck. It has been Scrambletown ever since. It is just a small community in the Forest, a loosely defined area near the intersection of County Roads 314 and 314A. The most prominent landmarks are the Cedar Creek Baptist Church and the Scrambletown Country Store. Everyone knows everyone and they look after each other. Family names are McDonald, Kinsey, Gores, Yarbrough, Counts, and Parramores. Sit-

Scrambletown home, the stories of living in the Ocala National Forest flow like corn liquor running from a coil of copper tubing. She is a lifelong



Betty McDonald, 7th generation Scrambletown, shows off her Barbados Sheep.

resident. Her great grandfather moved to the Forest from South Carolina in the 1870s. Her grandfather, Walter, was born in Scrambletown and made his living from the Forest. He hunted bear, coon, hogs, alligators and snakes. He raised tobacco and dried it for market in a barn that he built. He cut cypress knees to be sold to

the tourist trade. He was a good man, always willing to help friends, neighbors, and family in times of need. He also made whiskey



Scrambletown couple with Model A Ford, modified for back woods travel.

(moonshine). The production and sale of intoxicating liquor became illegal in the United States with the enactment of the 18th amendment in 1919. This created an opportunity for these hard working backwoodsmen to make a few badly needed dollars by producing moonshine. The process is a fairly simple one, a mash of corn, yeast, and sugar is allowed to ferment and then run through a distillation process to produce the whisky.



Law Enforcement checking out confiscated moonshine.

The local law enforcement people and the sheriff gave the back woods distilleries very little trouble. Many were customers. They liked a drink just like every one else,



Florida Scenic Highway



**Scrambletown**—Continued

but the Federal Revenue Agents, "Revenooers," raided the area frequently. However Walter and the other Scrambletown moonshiners were rarely caught and charged with the crime. They knew the woods too well, ran too fast and jumped too high to be chased down. In fact, Walter was never arrested for his illegal liquor activity. Even though the Federal Alcohol agents could not catch the moonshiners, they were able to find the stills. The result was worse than an arrest. They would "bust up" the stills and barrels of whiskey with their axes.

Betty's father, William Cecil McDonald, was born in the Forest in 1924. He became deaf as a child so it was difficult for him to find regular work. He followed his father's lead and made a living as a hunter and trapper, farmer and moonshiner. This was not unusual, as many in this small close-knit community in the Ocala National Forest did the same.

William sold raccoon pelts to a man in Tennessee, gator hides to a processor in Ocala, and captured live snakes, skunks, raccoons and alligators for Ross Allen at Silver Springs.

He did have an arrest for his gator poaching activity. One of his old gator hunting partners later became a wildlife officer. He used his inside knowledge to catch and arrest William in the act. The fine, \$50, was no big deal. It was paid by the Ocala leather dealer who was buying the hides. What really upset William was that they confiscated his light, ax, gun, boat and motor. However, he never got mad or held a grudge against his old poaching partner who arrested him.



Scrambletown gator harvest 1957, 2nd left Betty McDonald with her father Cecil McDonald.

Alligator hunting was another illegal activity that helped the woodsmen of Scrambletown to make a living as alligator hides were in high demand for belts, shoes and purses during that era. Since the 40's, however, alligator hunting has either been totally banned or highly regulated. The woods and lakes of the Ocala National Forest

were full of these giant reptiles. The gators were hunted at night. The hunters set out hooks baited with chicken. They would go out on the lakes at night with lights in their john boats. A hooked gator was pulled to the side of the boat and killed, most often with a single blow to the head with an ax. If they could not get in a good swing with an ax they would shoot the gator with a shotgun. One night's hunt could bring in 10 or more large alligators. There was a man in Ocala who bought all the hides they could bring in. There was good money in it because the hides often brought \$3 a foot. They also ate the meat occasionally, but the alligator was not a favorite food in Scrambletown.

Richard Mills was just a little boy of 6 when his family moved to Lynne, Florida, in 1927. He arrived just in time to witness

the limerock paving of State Road 40. His home was just a stone's throw from Scrambletown. There were stills all through the woods. Richard loved the outdoors and the woods and spent a lot of time hiking and exploring. He often ran into stills and the still operators. He tried to avoid them, if they were caught he did not want to be suspected of turning them in.



Receipts for gator hides purchased from Cecil McDonald by an Ocala Leather Broker in the mid 50's.

There were several small country stores in the area. One was Will Fore's store near the sight of the present Scrambletown Country Store. The main business and chief reason for existence of these stores was to sell sugar and cracked corn to the moonshiners. The stores also sold the finished product, corn liquor.

So the moonshine provided a constant cash flow for the depression-poor area. Brokers from nearby Ocala would come in and buy the moonshine in bulk and sell it to various retailers in Ocala. Richard remembers every Saturday an ambulance from Ocala would come through the area. He wondered, "Someone must be sick?" Then he figured it out. "They were hauling shine!"

Richard told me this story from the moonshine era. "Five or six fellows were just sitting around a little bridge over a creek near Pat's Island. There was a loud sloshing sound coming down the creek, everyone remained quiet expecting to see a bear. Slosh, slosh, slosh. Around the bend and under the bridge came a guy with a large jug of moonshine, bringing it out of the woods from a remote still. He was one surprised guy, caught red handed with his jug of liquor! That creek has been Whiskey Creek ever since. You can hike out there and check it out."



Richard Mills: There were stills all through these woods in the 30's and 40's.

After high school Richard served in the Army and joined the US Forest Service in 1948. He spent his entire career in the Ocala National Forest.

There was good liquor and bad liquor. But many produced a high quality and even went so far as to age it in oak barrels. He knew one Ocala doctor that bought the best quality moonshine and then aged it in barrels for several years. He would serve it to his friends on special occasions.

Even though the 18<sup>th</sup> amendment was repealed in 1933 money could still be made in the manufacture and sale of homemade corn liquor. The ordinary working man wanted a drink after a hard day's work, but could ill afford the high priced brands with their federal and state taxes. Locally produced and sold moonshine remained a viable business in and around Scrambletown into the 50s. The end of the moonshine era came in the early 50s as prison sentences for



**Scrambletown**—Continued

the crime were increased to a year or more and rising sugar prices cut into profits. The risk of being away from family and home over a year drove most Scrambletown moonshiners out of the liquor business.

So the high price of ingredients and longer jail terms killed the moonshine business and the decreasing demand for gator hides killed the gator poaching business. However, none of this could kill Scrambletown. Although many have had to seek employment in town, they still hunt and fish in the Forest. Scrambletown lives on, still proud, hard working, God-fearing, patriotic Americans. They still stick together, help one another in time of need, fight for their country in time of war and live free in the Forest in the area known as Scrambletown.

**Florida Scenic Byway Workshop**

*By Joan Bernat*

As the representative of the FBBSB CME, I attended the state-wide Florida Scenic Byway Workshop in St. Augustine from June 8th through June 10th. This is a city rich in history and culture, not to mention the awesome sunrises on St. Augustine Beach.



St. Augustine Lighthouse

The workshop began on Wednesday with a bus tour of the A1A Scenic & Historic Coastal Byway. The tour included stops at St. Augustine Lighthouse, St. Augustine Beach, Windswept Acres Park, Marine Land, and the historic Flagler Beach Pier. Narrations were by local byway experts.

On Thursday the workshop sessions began with an impressive opening session that included welcome statements by St. Augustine City Commissioner Bill Leary, St. Johns County Commissioner Cyndi Stevenson, and Florida House Representative Bill Proctor. Keynote speakers were David Nolan, a local author and historian, and Dana Ste. Claire, Director of the Dept. of Heritage Tourism & Historic Preservation, City of St. Augustine, who was born and raised near the Ocala National Forest. Each of the speakers had a common theme, how the Florida Scenic Highways Program benefits the state and local communities.

After the welcoming statements Mariano Berrios, State Scenic Highways Program Coordinator, presented the group with a lecture on the History of the Transportation Enhancement Act, which started in 1991 with the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (or ISTEA). Mariano also went through many of the acronyms of transportation systems and byways and their meanings. With the preliminaries covered, he then discussed how to solicit your application to the program in the State of Florida, eligibility (what projects will be funded), and the different phases of implementation. There were four sessions before lunch and another four sessions in the afternoon of the first full day. That night consisted of a reception at the

Lightner Museum, gave everyone a chance to say Hi. I came away with a notebook with 15 pages full of notes. Due to limitations of space, I'll cover only a few here, and even those not in great details. Some, like Visit Florida, which had an enormous amount of information, I have skipped; it would be advisable to visit their website - <http://www.visitflorida.com>.

Nathan DeVault and Kelly Gaines, of the firm Costa DeVault, covered "Utilizing Social Media." This included everything from branding, (e.g., Nike and Maytag) to websites, and everything in between. Important features of websites are the look and feel to lure people there. An interesting phrase came from Scott Talgo in the audience: "A brand that captures your mind gains behavior. A brand that captures your heart gains commitment." Some astounding figures also came out at the presentation regarding platforms: Facebook has 5 million people and 50% of those people log on daily; and Twitter attracts 1 billion tweets per week!

Jeff Caster of FDOT opened the session on "Florida's Quincennial, Roadside Wildflowers, and Highway Beautification" programs with this statement from Florida's constitution: "It shall be the policy of the state to conserve and protect its natural resources and scenic beauty". Did you also know that no other part of our country can show a greater variety of wild flowers, and in no other state are there so many plants of strange habits and remarkable characteristics. More than 3,000 species of flowering plants have been listed as growing in Florida. Jeff also went into weed management, planting, purchasing, and much more.

Sally O'Hara, Executive Director of Friends of A1A, presented "Engaging your Stakeholders" with a road map of principles, methods, and management. An interesting point for principals, a memorable experience, respect people, and manage by facts. The other points that were interesting were the "4 C's": Communicate verbally, in writing, or by sense of touch; Keep it simple and paint a picture, which is worth a thousand words; Connect between people and groups; and Convince by showing statistics, return on investment. There was also a section on volunteers and the roles they played, such as hospitality, advocacy, community outreach, and education.

Corridor Solutions principal, Wanda Maloney, talked about the FHSP state-wide CME assessment and sustainability evaluation. Unfortunately, there didn't seem to be enough time for Wanda to cover her presentation and answer all the questions that everyone seemed to have. Some of the highlights: The evaluation began last year and it was noted that the byway world has dramatically changed since the start of this project. At the time of this workshop there was no budget proposal yet for the National Scenic Byways program. Decisions about the future of the FSHP are less about what FHWA/wants/thinks and more about state priorities and goals. The byways must accept this new era, not only for sustainability, but to survive. Corridor Solutions did studies in five critical

**Florida Scenic Byway Workshop**—Continued

areas, Leadership, Finance, Community Participation, Effectiveness and Administrative Capacity. They also did two external factors, Program Policy, and Program Communications. One of the results that Corridor Solutions found was that communication has become murky among the organizations supporting Florida's Scenic Highway Plan.

The last day was FSHP goal setting session, where the participants split into 4 groups to discuss what we would like FSHP to do. Some ideas that came out of this were: have district mini-conferences or workshops biannually; create a quarterly newsletter, especially for relevant legislation actions; have an association of CME leaders for sharing ideas, stories, etc.

If you have never attended Florida Scenic Highway workshop, my suggestion is that it is well worth going to one -- there is a wealth of information from nationally-recognized experts. You can also check out the Florida Scenic Highway website for more information: <http://www.floridascenichighways.com/program/meeting/>.

--Joan Bernat is Production Editor of this Newsletter, webmaster of our website, and a member-at-large of our Executive Committee, among her many other contributions to FBBSB. At the Workshop, she volunteered to help with the new FSHP quarterly newsletter.

[Editor's Note. The state-wide FSHP Workshop is held every other year in locations alternating between the east and west coasts of Florida and other locations. The FBBSB CME has expressed an interest in hosting a future Workshop, perhaps in 2013, perhaps in Ocala, in conjunction with other area CME's. Stay tuned.]

**Bears' Appetites soar in Fall**  
**Stash your Garbage**

*By Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission*

Florida black bears turn into eating machines this time of year, stuffing their stomachs in preparation for winter. For gluttonous bears, raiding a garbage can may be more appealing than foraging in the woods. To reduce human-bear conflicts during the surge of bear activity in late summer and fall, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) urges people to keep food sources around their homes and businesses secure from bears.



How sweet it is.

"Due to the current drought, Florida black bears are starting earlier and

roaming farther this year in pursuit of the high-calorie meals that prepare them for winter," said FWC Bear Management Program Coordinator David Telesco. "People should respect the fact that bears are large, powerful wild animals. If people secure their garbage and other sources of food, bears will be less tempted to hang around in places where they don't belong."

So what exactly is food for a bear? In the wild, black bears eat berries, nuts, fruits and insects, with small animals filling just 5 percent of their diet. In neighborhoods, bears are typically dining on household trash, birdseed or pet food.

"If a bear has to choose between spending a few minutes chomping on a bag of dog food or several hours trying to find and eat 5,000 acorns to get the same amount of calories, the bear is going for the dog food," Telesco said. "Bear-proofing your property, however, can be as simple as storing garbage in a garage or shed and bringing in your pet food and birdseed at night."

Preventing access to food is the most important thing people can do to keep bears wild and out of neighborhoods. Black bears are normally shy and afraid of people. But bears can lose their natural fear if they become accustomed to getting food from people, and a bear's sense of smell is so keen that it can detect food more than a mile away. It is illegal in Florida to leave out food or garbage that will attract bears and cause human-bear conflicts.

With the number of Florida black bears up to about 3,000 and with cities and suburbs pushing farther into bear habitat, there are more chances people will encounter bears. Bears that leave forests to seek food are more likely to be killed: either hit by a vehicle, shot by a resident or euthanized by the FWC. If a bear is judged to present a risk to public safety, the FWC will euthanize the bear.

"Conflicts between people and bears are preventable," Telesco said. "The majority of people who follow the FWC's advice on how to safeguard food from bears don't have conflicts." He suggested that business owners and residents interested in getting bear-proof dumpsters and trash cans contact their waste service providers. For more information and suggestions see this link: <http://www.myfwc.com/conservation/you- conserve/wildlife/black-bears/>.

**Bear Sighting State Road 19**

*By Jim Thorsen*

It was July 19, 2011 and I was on my way to Wildcat Lake to meet Phil Davis, Stephanie Liskey and Scott Davis to visit key sites on the Florida Black Bear Scenic Byway. Phil and his crew are working on the Master Plan for the Byway. That morning was not a typical July morning -- relatively nice temperatures, very low humidity and clear skies. It was a very pleasant morning and one could tell that wildlife in the Ocala National Forest may be active and moving.

After spending a few minutes at Wildcat and enjoying the scenic view and planning our trip, we left for our first stop at Camp Ocala. As we drove South on State Road 19, I was commenting to the group that the entrance of Camp Ocala on a Forest Service road was a prime bear crossing due to habitat cover and a corridor from Billies Bay Wilderness Area. As soon as we made the turn to the west, a nice black bear crossed the road heading south. It appeared to be a juvenile male.



**Bear Sighting**—Continued

**Living in Bear Country Tips**



Photo by Cathy Connolly

The bear “loping” across the road stopped on the other side at the woods line. That became a perfect moment to snap photographs and video. The black bear cooperated and stayed in place for about ten seconds. This sighting made the entire day a success and a wonderful way to start a tour of the Byway.

We completed the day with lots of memories of all of our stops. The wildlife on the Ocala was active -- we saw scrub jays, sand hill cranes, hawks, and white tail deer. It's interesting how wildlife acts under certain weather conditions and knows when to move or rest.

*(Bear Sighting reports are a regular feature of our newsletter. If you have had a bear encounter that you would like to share please contact Tom Rose at [tomrose43@gmail.com](mailto:tomrose43@gmail.com))*

To keep bears away, make sure you follow this advice:

- Secure household garbage in a shed, garage, or a wildlife resistant container (like a [bear-resistant container](#) or [caddy](#)).
- Put household garbage out on morning of pick-up rather than the night before.
- Secure commercial garbage in bear resistant dumpsters.
- Protect gardens, apiaries, compost and livestock with electric fencing.
- Encourage your home owners association or local government to institute ordinances on keeping foods that attract wildlife secure.
- Feed pets indoors or bring in dishes after feeding.
- Clean grills and store them in a locked, secure place.
- Remove wildlife feeders or make them [bear resistant](#).

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Defenders of Wildlife  
<http://www.defenders.org/habitat>  
Gilchrist Sausage Co  
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<http://www.ocalamarion.com/spring-and-summer-savings.asp>  
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<http://www.manta.com/c/mtmq5p/smittys-designs-llc>  
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<http://www.greenbank.com>  
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American Land and Leisure  
<http://www.american.com>  
Inwood Consulting Engineers, Inc  
<http://www.inwoodinc.com/>  
Olde Mill Stream & Charlie Johnson Builder  
<http://www.oldemillstreamrvresort.com/>  
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<http://www.fristgreenbank.com>  
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<http://camprrm.com/>  
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**Scrub Jay Business**

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<http://www.brechtssausage.com>  
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<http://www.putnam-fl.com/bocc/>  
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