

THE NATIONAL ANTHEM OF LECANTO, FLORIDA U.S.A.

WHEN THE MAGNOLIA TREE BLOOMS IN LECANTO

As sung by Buddy Max

Key of C

It was early in spring time when all was so gay, The  
 sun was bright shining and I heard you say, I  
 love you so truly I give you my heart, We  
 both made a promise we never would part.

Chorus  
  
 When the Magnolia tree blooms in Lecanto,  
 blooming for you and for me, When the  
 Magnolia tree blooms in Lecanto, You'll be  
 coming home with me.

2nd verse

For years we have traveled  
 from north to the south,  
 From east to the west  
 we worked all a bout,  
 But one thing for certain  
 that I've got to say,  
 The years we have traveled  
 together we stayed.

3rd verse

Now its late in the evening  
 and all seems so still,  
 A whippoorwill sang  
 Just over the hill,  
 Told us a story  
 A touch in our hearts,  
 The promise we made  
 we never did part.

# Old Schools Never Die . . .

The story of this unique island schoolhouse can be told best by one who taught school there and learned the ways of an island school teacher. Mrs. Cattie Martint taught four months in the summer of 1930 and five months in the summer of '31. She taught the winter months in 1935, '36, '42 and '43. So this is her version of "The Isle of Knowledge" as Ripley's Believe It Or Not" named the island schoolhouse one time in his column.

When I went down there the summer of 1930 to teach, it was an interesting experience for me.

At that time the school term was four or five months during the summer. This was to allow the older boys to fish in the fall and winter months to help swell the family finances. I taught two summers before the school officials decided to have a full term during the winter. There were no large boys attending school then.

Teaching school on a small island in those days was quite different from the schools of today. I had only one year's teaching experience in a small rural school. Since I was just a little afraid of water, I couldn't swim.

Here I was expected to teach fifteen or eighteen youngsters that could handle boats like professionals and swim like ducks. They ranged in ages from five to sixteen.

I boarded with a family that lived on the north side of the river about one-half mile from the school. There were two boys in the family that were experts at rowing boats. They taught me to row that first summer. (continued) If anyone has the Ripley clipping, will you please call me. 795-4383.



BATTERED by weather, wind and water, this age old schoolhouse still stands in its picturesque setting, a monument to how the small community of Ozello settled a bitter issue about 87 years ago.

18-F

St. Petersburg Times, Sunday, Feb. 7, 1960



SCENE AT OZELLO SOON MAY GIVE WAY

... to houses, population as land is readied for buyers.

# City Whites Say It's Bridge That Killed

Suncoast Sentinel:

On April 29th at 10 a.m. my husband, John, driving my car, and myself left for Brooksville on the only route out of Ozeello, State Rd 491. We've been over this road 1000 times before.

We were surprised at Happy Helen's to see the road crew out in earnest. Golly, we are finally going to get a paving! We hope a little more than the usual (waste of taxpayers money), put a little sand on, then three weeks later a little more sand to fill up the holes in the McAdam road. Those boys on the 491 detail must have loved the job. In fact, they could go fishing any time. (That's really not fair.)

OK, so this time we've got all the equipment from Brooksville and I mean all: Trucks, graders, rollers and more trucks! In fact, they were being very courteous. We got the go sign to pass, in the ditch of course, but it wasn't wet for once. So we sailed by at about our usual 35 MPH.

Then we approached the wooden bridge. I said, John, slow down,

it may be slippery, so we did to about 25 MPH. It was all black with tar tracks and we hit! What did we hit? There suddenly was no bridge! We sailed on just like a plane, except before we could span it all I saw before me was planks. Of course, by then with our small car we had to strike. We couldn't clear them. Been better if we were going fast. Might have jumped the whole mess. We struck somewhere and I hit the ceiling and saw stars. Our dog got tangled up from the back seat over my shoulder on the floor. I was afraid to turn my head and look at John. He was cripping the wheel and all he said was "God." I turned and said, "A-men." I couldn't move, but he got out and I said go back and see what happened. He did and said the bridge was gone, 15 ft. of it. I don't know where John applied the brakes but I guess he did for we were stock still. No one was in sight. I said better go back and tell those road men what happened.

I climbed out and followed him through the sticky tar. We approached the first truck and the gentle-

men (and that they are) said Mam, will you go back and stop all on coming vehicles? And I did. After all, any unsuspecting soul speeding along, as almost everyone does, would hit more and worse than we did. That side of the road was utterly impassible, a complete sink-in of timbers to the waterline. I only got to stop construction trucks, and I guess they thought I was a mad woman flailing my arms.

A neighbor of ours, Mr. Waterman, came walking up and I asked him if he would call the State Police as sure enough I wasn't going to move. The car might have a broken axle. I waited and waited 1 1/4 hours. When the police car came he had to talk to the bridge men first for repairs, etc. Meanwhile I was seething with fury. Mr. Waterman called because we had an accident and could have bled to death. But the state trooper, because we didn't become hysterical, assumed his duties were first to the bridge and later to anyone who might have been hurt.

I think the hero of the whole episode was one man in a red truck

from the hiway Dept. who was kind and solicitous (his name was Jack). I think it takes one to get drowned or killed to have a small amt. of police protection (for the bodies that is.)

Now, the last truck of the hiway asphalt came over that bridge from Rte. 19 to Ozeello evidently moments before we did, going the other way. hit the cave in. Don't tell me that last truck didn't know something crashed at least under his hind wheels. There were fresh scrape marks not made by us as though his undercarriage struck some wood. That truck must have known or felt the bridge go beneath him and he went past.

If this truck driver knew what he did, would he not stop and tell (someone) to investigate? Evidently he did not. His fellow drivers would have gone in and under. I happen to know that channel is pure sucking mud.

No, it took us, the poor who can only afford to live on unpaved roads and rickety bridges to fall in or get hurt. We ration our gas to that each trip is necessary. I don't mind

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dirty politics turn  
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that doesn't make safe  
it? Betty Bruckmev

# Residents Say Ozello Bridge

## Unsafe For School Buses

Tampa Tribune Dec 8 1978

By JIM TUNSTALL  
Tribune Staff Writer

OZELLO — Would you allow your children to ride a 15-ton school bus twice daily over a broken down bridge, a bridge that is posted with a sign reading, "Caution — Travel At Your Own Risk" and that carries a maximum weight limit of 10 tons?

That's the question on the minds of many Ozello Civic Club members and community residents, but attempts to have some type of action taken by the state Department of Transportation, Citrus County Commission and the School Board have thus far failed.

"We're not trying to cause trouble," club member Betty Newsome told The Tribune Thursday, "but when it comes to our kids, we want some action."

The bridge in question, one of two outdated, one-way wooden structures spanning the Salt River along state Road 494, must be crossed by the bus and any other vehicle entering or leaving Ozello.

There is no other way in or out by land.

Although complaints and talk of replacing the bridge date back several years, Newsome said residents of the tiny settlement became alarmed last week when a piling partially crumbled, causing the bridge to sink about four inches.

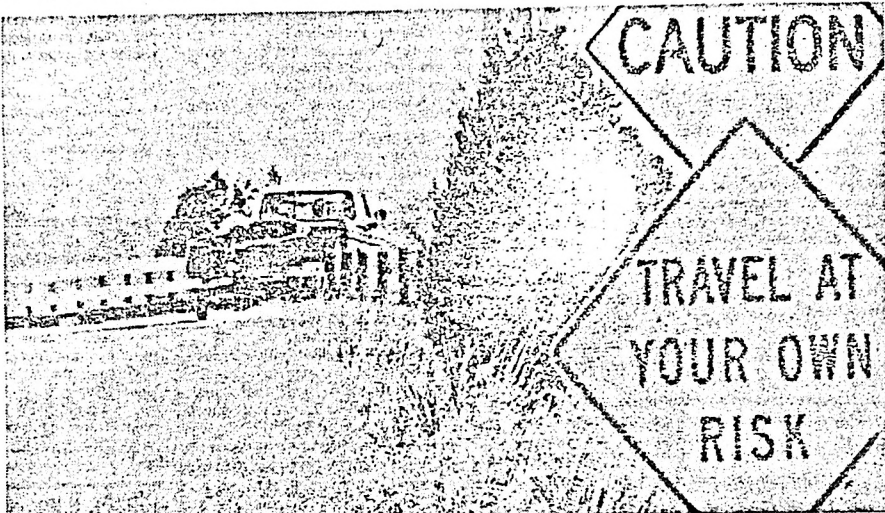
The bridge was temporarily repaired by the county road department, but many residents feel it is still unsafe for the busload of 33 children and other traffic forced to use it. And plans to replace the structure with a concrete crossing have become bogged down in governmental red tape.

"We had those bridges on the priority list with the Department of Transportation three years ago when they were still controlled by the state," former County Commissioner Walter Bunts said.

Bunts, within whose district Ozello fell, said efforts to remedy the situation during his tenure failed and the state gave the bridge and roadway back to the county about four to five months ago.

"It's expected to take another three months to finish the engineering for the new bridge," he continued, "and it would take another 6-8 weeks before the bids would be in and work could be started."

"We're not trying to cause trouble," club member Betty Newsome told The Tribune Thursday, "but when it comes to our kids, we want some action."



Signs warn motorists of dangerous conditions on Ozello road.

— Tribune Photo by Bob Hannah

The county has scheduled a meeting with state officials at 10:30 a.m. this morning at the courthouse in Inverness in hopes of remedying the situation or at least getting assurances that the bridge is safe until a new one is built.

Meanwhile, the bus continues to make its rounds.

"We are moving on this as quickly as possible," newly elected Commissioner Catherine Rooks said Thursday, "and we're trying to find out what tonnage is safe."

Rooks defeated Bunts in the Democratic primary this fall as well as in the October runoff election.

She said the road department had stabilized the bridge, but added that she was concerned because the loaded school bus weighed approximately 15 tons, five tons over the posted weight limit.

"We hope to have temporary bridges put in as quickly as possible and we're doing all that we can do at present."

Charles Dean, director of general services for the Citrus County School Board, also said the weight limit on the bridge is "questionable."

— But Dean said the bus is currently operating and would continue to oper-

ate unless notification is received that the bridge is unsafe.

He said he hoped for a recommendation from the state people today.

"I feel the school system as well as the parents that live in Ozello should have an assurance that it is safe to put that bus back and forth," he added.

Whatever the decision, today's meeting will include DOT officials, state environmentalists, county leaders and, of course, civic club members.

"I just hope they do something quick," Newsome said, "because if anything happens to that bridge we'll have to go to and from our houses by boat."



**BRIDGE EXAMINATION** — Citrus County Commissioner Catherine Rooks and Road Superintendent Myron Townsend, examining a piling under the Black Creek bridge near Ozello Wednesday after repairs were made to the wooden structure. The bridge was tested by driving an 11-ton Mack truck over the structure prior to weight limits being increased to 10 tons.

## Ozello Back To Near Normal As Bridges Get Temporary Repairs

Temporary repair of two wooden bridges on Highway 494, the only access to Ozello, has restored near normal activity to the small island community.

Warren Hilger, Citrus County engineer, examined the repaired wooden piling Wednesday and an 11-ton Mack truck was driven across the span, stopping periodically while timbers were checked. Hilger said the bridges should be adequate to support 10 tons if the load limit is not violated. However, he warned citizens that heavier loads could weaken the structure and shift the piling.

"That could put us right back where we were," Hilger said, referring to a damaged piling which forced the Citrus

Commission to reduce load limits to 4 tons.

Citrus County Commissioner Catherine Rooks also enlisted the support of all truckers who must cross the bridge to enter Ozello.

"The bridge is now safe for 10 tons," she emphasized, "but it will not stay that way if big trucks don't stay off."

Commissioner Rooks said construction will begin on temporary bridges after bids are completed in about three weeks. She said it will take about 6 to 8 weeks to complete construction of the temporary spans. Permanent bridges will be constructed during the next year.

Rooks said the total cost of the entire project, including removal of existing bridges,

temporary, and permanent bridges will be about \$400,000.

Bonnie Gullage, operator of Pirate's Cove in Ozello said she is relieved the bridges have been repaired and the load limit restored. The repairs mean Pirate's Cove will receive the necessary supplies to continue operating the business.

Mrs. Gullage said she feels the repairs will be adequate to maintain normal business in Ozello until new bridges can be built.

Pat Wilson, a parent whose children were forced to walk over the bridge while the heavy school bus spanned the bridge during the repair period, was also relieved that restoration is complete and the 10 ton load limit reinstated.

"It has been a significant problem for a lot of parents," she said, "but I think the problem has been resolved."

The school bus will resume normal activities and transport children over the Black Creek bridges after the holidays. The decision to haul children over the bridges was made after it was determined the bus weighs far less than originally estimated.

Commissioner Rooks said the bus was taken to a weighing station where it was determined it weighs only 9 tons, much less than original reports of 15 tons.

Dorothy Chalk, who must pass over the two wooden structures twice daily, cheered the news that the bridges have been declared safe for 10 tons.

**Helen Brown, 91** of  
CRYSTAL RIVER

Helen H. Brown, 91, Crystal River, died Tuesday, June 7, 2005, at Cypress Cove Care Center in Crystal River.

She was born Aug. 1, 1913, in Fairmount, the daughter of S.C. and Carrie (Barnes) Hough. Fairmount is now known as Connell Heights.

She was a lifelong resident of the area, living all of her married life in Ozello. She was a graduate of Crystal River High School. She was the oldest living member of the Crystal River United Methodist Church.

She was preceded in death by her husband, John J. Brown, in 1992, whom she married on Oct. 29, 1932, in Homosassa.

She is survived by three sons, Joe and Tom Brown of Crystal River and Jim Bob Brown of Mariana; two sisters, Hilda Roland and Kitty Wood of Crystal River; seven grandchildren; and seven great-grandchildren.

Strickland Funeral Home, Crystal River.

6-7-06

# HOT stuff

*Ozello native making a splash with his pepper products named for his old stomping grounds*

By Claire Phillips Laxton  
Current Editor

If you like pepper products then you might want to try Tom Brown's Ozello Island Pepper Products. "This is something I stumbled on and the business just mushroomed," Brown said.

Today he sells his products both retail and wholesale, does lots of arts and craft shows and takes orders by phone and ships if the customer pays the shipping costs.

He began this business after he see **Pepper** Page 4



CLAIRE PHILLIPS LAXTON/Current

Tom Brown shows off one of his Ozello Islands Pepper Products that he sells wholesale, retail in shops and in craft shows.

## Pepper

continued from Page 1

retired from Florida Power, now called Progress Energy, as a master mechanic. "I worked my way up from laborer to master mechanic," he said.

A friend gave him his first recipe and he began cooking occasionally for fellow workers while working at the plant. Once he retired, he began introducing more and more recipes for pepper jelly, dips and basting flavors. Then he began selling his products by popular demand.

His newest product on the market is a bottle of peach and hot pepper glaze used to baste a pork butt or various meats. He also creates an Ozello Islands Marsh Dipping Sauce, Strawberry Hot Dat'l Pepper Jelly, Ozello Islands Sweet Pepper Jelly, Ozello Island Mango and Habanero Pepper Jelly, Ozello Islands Blueberry/Cayenne Pepper Jelly, Ozello Islands

Honey Mustard Sauce, (hot), and Ozello Islands Dat'l Hot Pepper Sauce.

Last weekend he sold his pepper products at the annual Watermelon Festival in Chiefland and the week before at Red Belly Day at Fanning Springs.

He usually is in the Crystal River Pilot Club's Christmas in September event at the Crystal River Armory, Cedar Key Arts and Crafts Show in the fall, the Homosassa Seafood Festival in November and the Crystal River Rotary's Manatee Festival in downtown Crystal River during the winter.

"I was also in the chili cookoff this year at the Ozello Civic Association," he said.

He hails from Crystal River, but calls his products Home of the Ozello Islands Pepper Products because he was born and raised in Ozello, just like his parents and grandparents.

He makes 10 different varieties of pepper sauces that can be topped on cream cheese then

spread on crackers. Anyone who buys his products gets a pepper cheese spread recipe compliments of the Ozello Islands Products.

He has his kitchen license and is state certified by the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Service, he said. The facility is in O'Brien in Suwannee County where he and his wife, Martha Sue, own land.

"I make all the products there where I have my kitchen license in Suwannee County," he said.

Brown enjoys meeting other crafters and people at the shows he attend and says "I will continue to do this until I can't do it anymore."

His products are sold in Homosassa at Mc Crae's Gift Shop, Natures Resort Country Store, and at Storement's Produce in front of Wal-Mart; in Crystal River at the Crystal River Wine and Cheese, Willow Creek Secret Gardens, Carvings on the Water and at N&M Seafood on County Road 495; in Lecanto, his products are sold at the American Deli & Grocery; and the Food Ranch in Inglis carries them as does the Riverside Antique and Gift Shop in Yankeetown.

For more information on the Ozello Islands Pepper Products, call 795-6621, or e-mail at ozellopeppers@xratwind.net.



JOHN DEBUSK was a famous hunting and fishing guide for the wealthy visitors to the coastal areas of Citrus County. Many of the descendants of the DeBusk clan still live in the community.

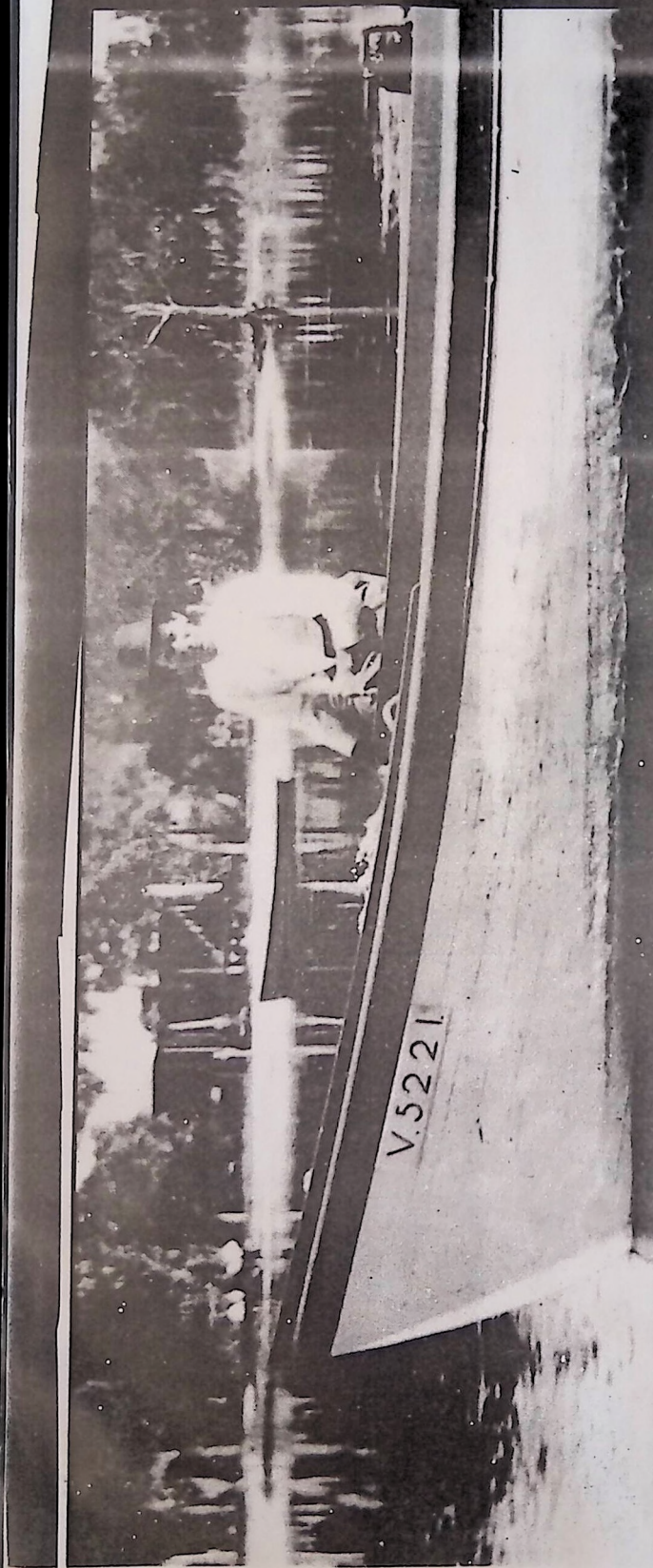


J. Henry DeBusk

Red  
fish



J. Henry DeBusk



HIS OLD PHOTO shows John DeBusk in his boat which brought many a northern sportsman into the coastal backwaters of Citrus

County for fishing and hunting expeditions which made this region famous for several decades.

John William DeBusk



John + Henry + J.T.  
BROWN DeBusk BROWN



## Obituary

Mrs. Emily DeBusk died March 26, 1930, after a wasting sickness of several years. She was born in Alabama July 6, 1861. Left an orphan at the age of seven she moved with her grandparents to Marion County, Florida. Married to Mr. Stokes May 22, 1878 she was left a widow June 17, 1894. In the year of 1897 she was married to Mr. J. T. DeBusk of Oxford. They moved to Ozello, Florida, where they resided until the death of Mr. DeBusk, November 16, 1921.

At the time of her death she was with friends at Apopka. Mrs. DeBusk was a consecrated Christian and was very sympathetic and generous with those in need.

She had three step-children who were devoted to her and they with a host of friends are left to mourn her departure from this life.



Cary Preston DeBusk + John William DeBusk



John William DeBusk



Sally DeBusk + Mary Elizabeth  
Brown  
Waddington DeBusk  
wife of John W.

Electricity didn't reach the Ozello islands until the '60s. Until then its hardy residents did just fine with Kerosene lamps and maybe a few Aladdin lamps. They remained cut off and in a private world of their own — until the arrival of battery radios. Even today, the residents seem most pleased that they are still isolated and that only one narrow road leads to their paradise.

One of Citrus County's best kept secrets is the spectacular water view at the end of the road through Ozello. (Once called Rochelle.)

By the time awards were being given out, some had left. John Brown, 79, qualified as the oldest man then present. And the oldest lady present, who also received a special award, was Lena Coffey, 92, a retired teacher from Atlanta, a nine year resident.

When all who were over 60 were asked to stand up, many rose from their folding chairs or picnic benches.

Meanwhile, the shouts of children playing games mingled with the rock and roll music of "Singing Jack Smith" and his Band from the Multipurpose Senior Center at Lecanto. Elaine Baker, the center's lively director, was dancing up a storm as was Ed Stevens, of Beverly Hills with his partner. Band members tapped kitchen utensils, a plastic dish, cowbells, a broom handle and miscellaneous items that somehow gave out a beat that made a lot of feet

of this year's old-time reunion — Ozello's third "Pioneer Day."

She stood by as several children listened to their elders tell still another story about their early days.

"I don't remember how many times I was late for school," someone chuckled "All

start tapping. Ozello's teen-agers were playing volleyball, selling hotdogs and cotton candy plus running a Rummage Sale. All as a part of the Community Youth Group.

"After all, our youth are our future old-timers," someone said. "We want them to feel they are a part of our heritage."

Someone volunteered to look the crowd over and list those present who once attended the "Isle of Knowledge" School.

"Well, there's Carl Stephens, Polly Brimmage, John Brown, Horace Brown, Harvey DeBusk, Cary DeBusk and Leon Head. There might be a couple others hidden somewhere. But I don't see them here on the grounds right now."

For a record attendance by a family, it looked like the Waddingtons may have won hands down. Jim Waddington pointed out that his grandfather, John, came from St. Louis. "There were nine of us children. Present today are five: Ruby, Mabel, Henry, Frances and myself."

The Waddingtons lived on an island known as Waddington Island and attended school on another island, known as New Rochelle, where Pirate's Cove is now located.

One of the sun-bonneted, long-skirted women who was seen visiting group after group with her ready smile was Thelma Henderson, a mere 10-year resident whose interest and regard for her community is evident. She was Committee Chairman

do when going to school out here was jump in the water, get wet, then walk in the school room and tell the teacher you'd had an accident with your boat."

Not many students could give that excuse to a teacher today — not even

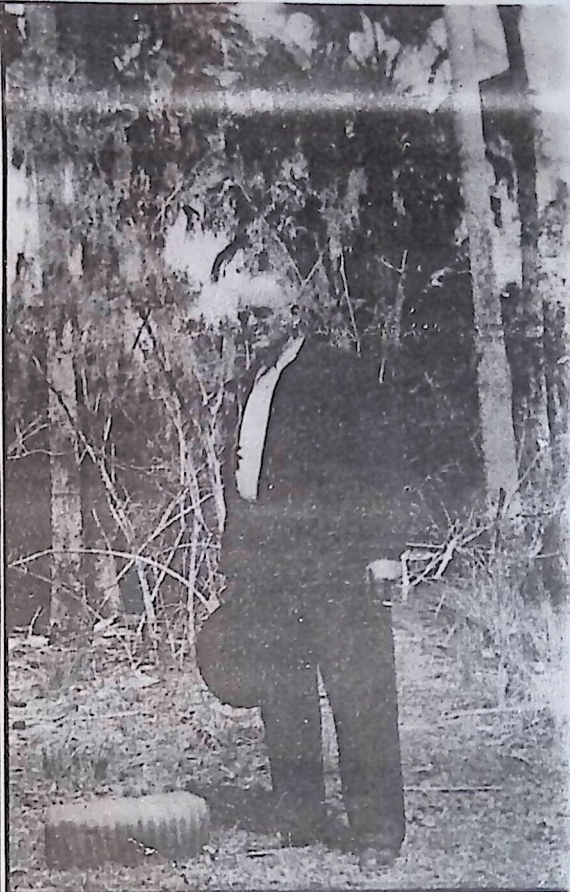


John Henry DeBusk





**SALLY DEBUSK BROWN**, wife of Jim Brown, is the mother of John and Horace Brown. She was a life-long resident of Ozello and lived to be nearly 102.



**THE BROWN FAMILY** in Ozello has a long history. This is an old photo of Jim Brown, father of John and Horace Brown.



**A MUCH YOUNGER** Sally DeBusk was to marry James Brown, who became the parents of John and Horace Brown. She poses with Mary Elizabeth Waddington sometime during the turn of the century. Ms. Waddington married John William DeBusk, a famous coastal fishing and hunting guide of the 1920's. *Sally sister to John William DeBusk*



1/28/74  
9

boat every day.  
"We were the only children in the whole county who went to school in rowboats," Mrs. Stephens said. "And the eight grades in that one room school was all the formal education any of us children ever had."

She remembers her mother scrubbing the bare white wood floors of the house every week, so hard that the floors shone with cleanliness.

In those far off Ozello days there was no running water, no electricity and the family used outdoor privies.

Ozello didn't get electricity until the 1950s," Mrs. Stephens added.

Mrs. Brown also remembers her old woodburning stove on which she cooked all the family meals and the fireplaces that heated the rest of the house.

Mrs. Stephens said, "All Daddy had to do was go out and get some of the wood from the cedar trees all around us for firewood.

Now living a peaceful life with her granddaughter, Mrs. Brown enjoys visits from old friends and relatives.

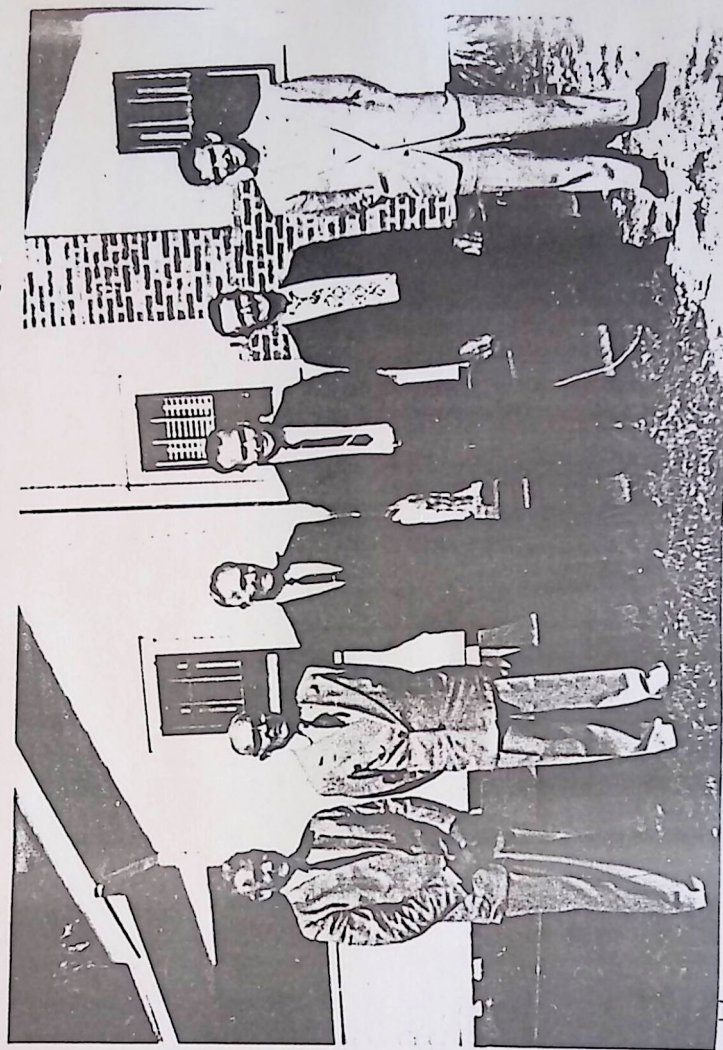
Mrs. Brown also enjoys a good dish of Mulligan's stew," Mrs. Watson said. "And I've gotten her to eat eggs — she didn't like them before. And she enjoys her breakfast cereal.

"But Grandma is very fussy about the food she eats. She won't eat any of the fat on meat — that may be one of the reasons she's lived so long," Mrs. Watson added.

And she's nearly always in good health, except for the physical damage left by the stroke, Mrs. Watson added.

"I feel fine," Mrs. Brown said.

"She may outlive all of us," said Mrs. Stephens,

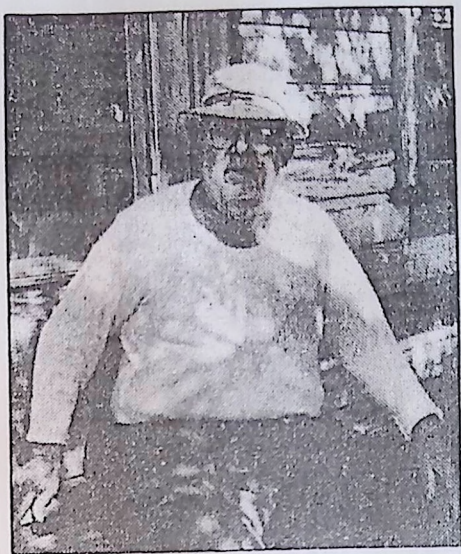


HERMAN Henry Cary Harvey Edgar + KENNETH SON of HERMAN

The DeBusk Brothers of  
Sohn William DeBusk + Mary Elizabeth Waddington  
DeBusk

## Seaside Scenes In Ozello

Located on State Road 494 off U.S. 19, between Crystal River and Homosassa Springs, is the quaint seaside village of Ozello. Picturesque buildings and boats dot the maze of islands that stretch for nine miles down a winding road. At left, an old tree on one of the islands is silhouetted against the shimmering sea. Some residents say Ozello is named for the daughters, Ozello and Ozöna, of the first man to purchase property there. However, longtime resident John J. Brown, right, says the name came about when residents could not agree upon a name for the community, and the community's first postmaster, Will Platt, asked U.S. postal officials to name the village. The name they sent back to Platt was Ozello. Below is a dock located at what Brown says is the original site of the town. — Tribune Photos by Bob Hannah





## Ozello and Chassahowitzka

Citrus County's two other coastal communities of Ozello and Chassahowitzka are a good place for anyone wanting to sample seafood from a variety of fine restaurants. There are also ample opportunities for fishing, boating, crabbing, swimming, or just about any other way to enjoy nature.

Ozello, located at the end of the curvy Ozello Trail, is a small and cozy little water town. There are several restaurants and pubs to visit. The county has also built a fishing pier and dock that gets plenty of use. There are county boating facilities at Ozello as well.

Chassahowitzka, also in the Gulf, features a campground and a marina from which you can rent a boat or rent a canoe. There are also many interesting restaurants and other businesses in the Chassahowitzka area.



Ozello Causeway



Photo by Lawrence Bugg

## Mullet's Run

Cary DeBusk unloads mullet at the dock in Crystal River. Commercial fishermen bring

catches to dock to be weighed. Mullet are running in the Gulf of Mexico now.

# Mullet Fishermen



Cary DeBusk, commercial fisherman, Crystal River.

**DeBUSK, WILLIAM CARY, 85**, of Crystal River, died Saturday (Aug. 6, 1994) at Crystal River Geriatric Center. He was a lifelong resident of Citrus County and was a retired commercial fisherman. He was a former member of the Pasco County Fishing Guide Association and a Protestant. Survivors include three sons, Derl, Crystal River, and Terry and Sidney, both of Orlando; three daughters, Malvina Riggs, Lecanto, Connie DeBusk, Crystal River, and Kathy DeBusk, Orlando; a brother, Joseph, Crystal River; 25 grandchildren; 38 great-grandchildren; and three great-great-grandchildren. Strickland Funeral Home, Crystal River.

a  
vanishing  
breed





A SALUTE — Cary DeBusk mustered what he had thought to be a long lost talent to paint this '76 tribute. A commercial fisherman and guide, DeBusk was once an aspiring artist, and here he demonstrates his talent. [CPS Photo by Lawrence Bugg.]

Oct 13 1985

## Cary DeBusk Musters Up Talent For '76 Salute

By LAWRENCE BUGG  
CPS Correspondent

Cary DeBusk summoned a near-dormant talent to offer a year end salute to America's bicentennial in a neat maroon and black sign on his automobile.

A veteran fishing guide, he said that at the age of 17 he began a correspondence course from the School of Applied Art at Battle Creed, Mich.

He was getting along well and the school guaranteed him a job as a commercial artist in a big city. "I wanted the wide open spaces," he said, "so I never did finish the course. Sign painting is about the only thing I got out of it."

In 1959 and 1960, he said, he quit commercial fishing and painted billboards for a year and a half.

"I couldn't stay away from the water, though," he said, "so I came back and went net fishing for mullet."

While living at Ozello he began his career as a guide for duck hunters. When the hunters got interested in fishing he became a fishing guide. Much later, after living for a while at Homosassa Springs, he moved to Crystal

and became a member of the guide association.



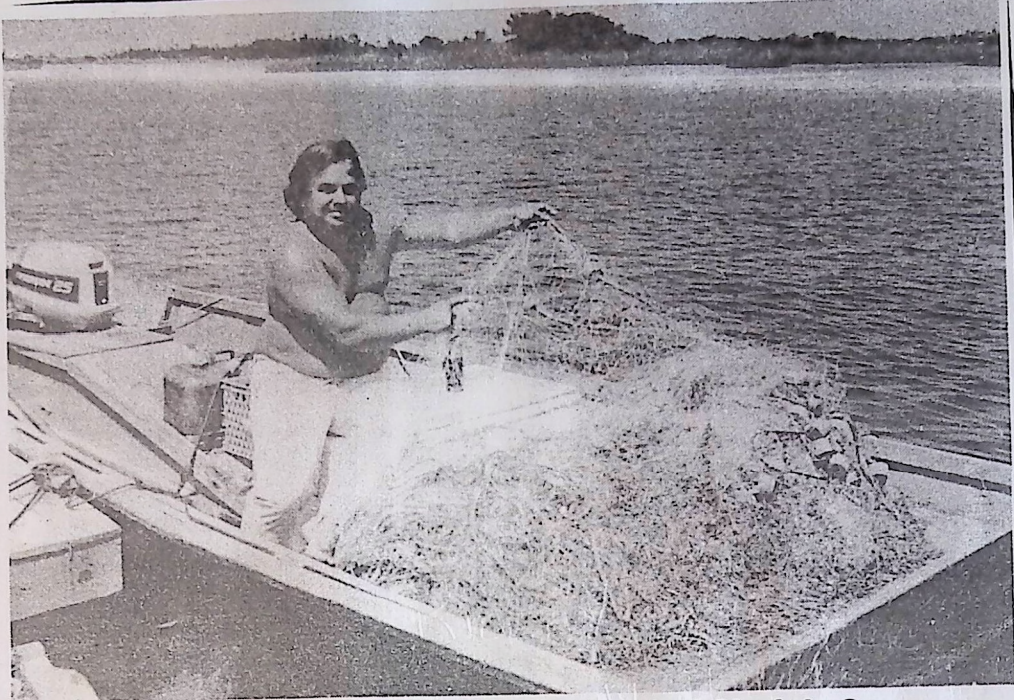
Tribune photograph by ANDY JONES

## Net mending

Cary DeBusk, 78, a lifelong Citrus County resident and fisherman, mends a mullet net in his back yard. DeBusk, who also is a fishing guide, says that although the local coastal area has changed considerably, the fishing is still good.



**CARY DE BUSK** in his fishing boat, probably in the late 1960s. The photo was taken on the Homosassa River near what was Riverside Lodge. Note in the background on the opposite side of the river is Crumps when it was a private fishing resort.



My  
Brother

Fisherman Tom DeBusk and his boat at Pirate's Cove

## FISHING THE COAST

... of time and tide and a fisherman

By **NORM SWETMAN**  
Columnist

Thunderheads, blue-black and rumbling like an artillery duel in a far off battle, mount up over the hot, humid coastal islands of the Gulf. A freshening breeze bends the sawgrass turning it to silver ripples, cutting through the ninety-three degree heat of an August afternoon in Ozello.

Fisherman Tom DeBusk ties up his one-man fishing boat at the floating dock at Pirate's Cove, a combination restaurant, bar and local meeting spot for residents. Tipping up a cold bottle of beer, he lets it wash over the back of his throat and sighs deeply, "Hot out there. I've never been in deep trouble in all my years of fishing because I know when to come in. Never fooled with those thunderstorms. I've seen what lightning and water can do." Thunder washes in, dully carried on the hot breeze.

DeBusk, in his early thirties, was born and raised in Ozello among the maze of tiny islands separated by tidal channels. He learned fishing from his father and later on went into business for himself.

Usually he's out running his crab traps by six in the morning and he's

back in by nine-thirty. If it's a good day he'll pile his seine net in the bow and set out in the channels looking for mullet.

"You can spot 'em. You'll see a ruffle in the water up ahead. You have to know the difference between wind gusting ripples, underwater snags or fish action. I'm pretty good, but there are old-timers who can spot 'em faster."

DeBusk is stocky and tanned, with a muscular build that comes from lifting the dead weight of crab traps from channel bottoms and heaving in nets weighted with fish, turtles, jellyfish and occasionally a small shark.

"Best day's catch I ever had - oh, about twenty-two hundred pound," he remembered. "That's a little unusual, though. Winter time is a good time to fish. Besides the mullet, I can pick up redfish, trout and sheephead. They get so cold they move slow and you could use a hand net to pick them out of the water."

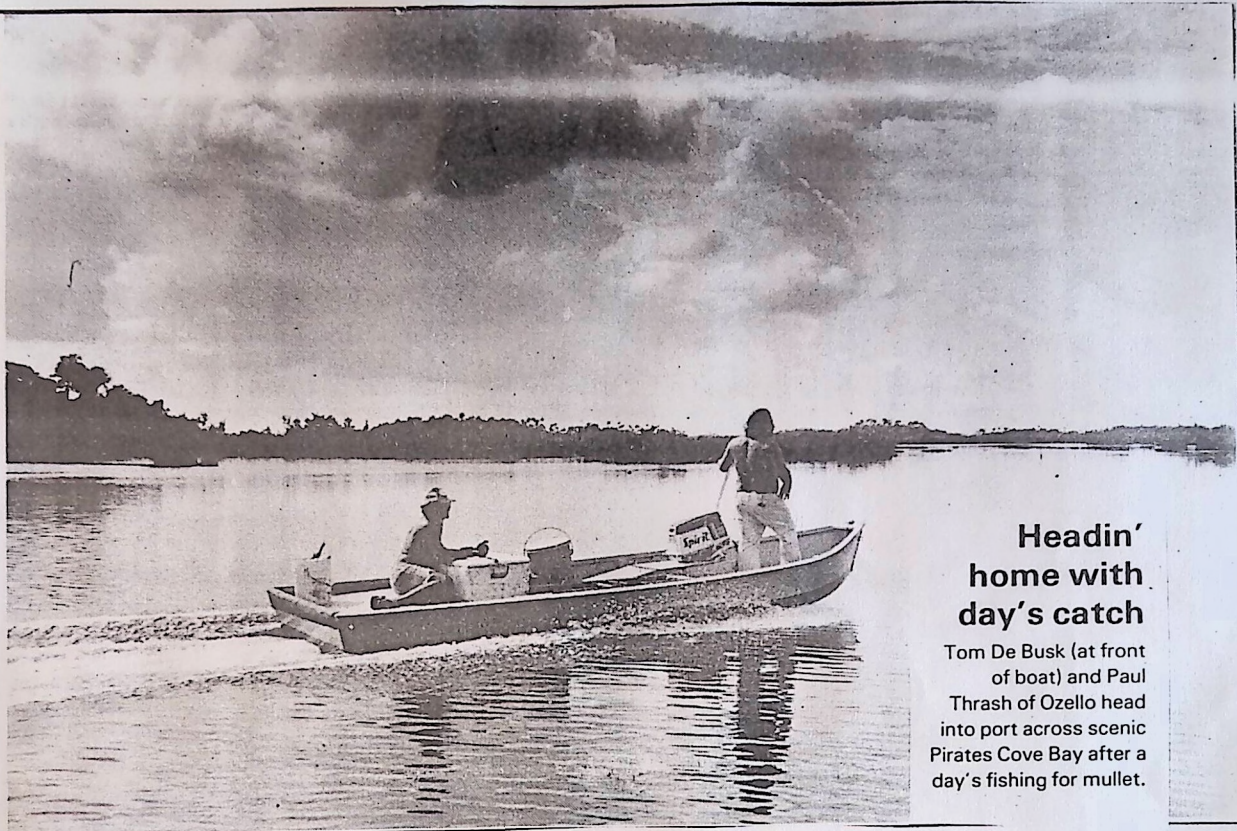
Wintertime is also the time when the mullet are full of roe and the young fisherman can raise his price from twenty-five cents to thirty cents a pound. He sells to a person he calls

better known fish wholesalers, Buck Sheppard.

In the summertime he makes a few dollars running his crab traps (twenty-two cents a pound on the market, twenty-five cents from the peddler), and in the winter months, those with "R's" in them, he tongs out a few pounds of oysters.

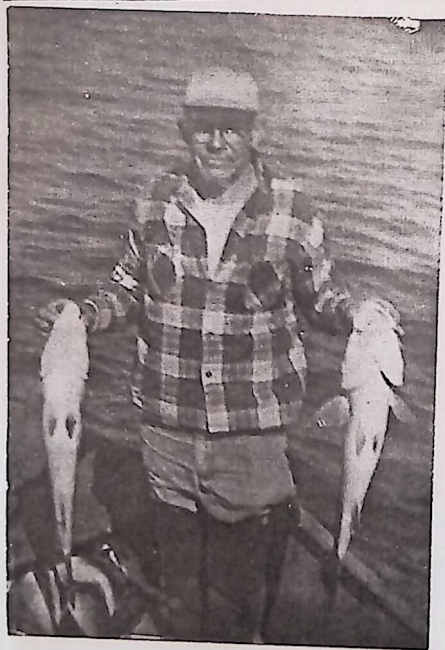
"Yeah," he nods, looking out at the network of channels crisscrossing among the island, "I guess I know every stream around here. There's a few rocks around there, too. Everyone's got my name on it."

Fishing is hard work. It's uncertain and the fisherman is always at the mercy of the weather and the whims of the fish, but Tom DeBusk wouldn't be any other place. "Early morning is the best time," he offered hesitantly. We knew what he meant. There's a time in the blue shadows of dawn while the mist is still hanging over the water, when the quiet is broken only by the awakening cries of the seabirds and the splash of feeding fish - it's a time when the breeze changes from the land side and comes in from the sea - it's a time that belongs eternally to a man and his thoughts.



### Headin' home with day's catch

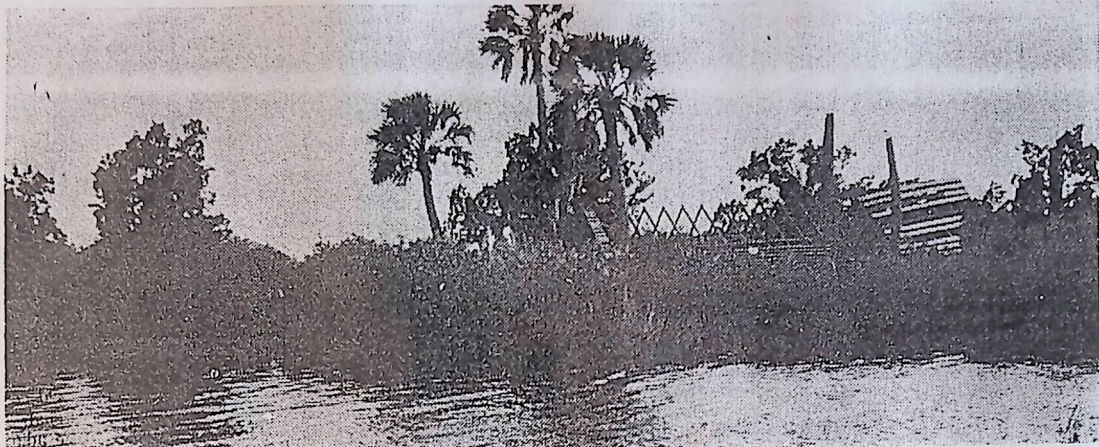
Tom De Busk (at front  
of boat) and Paul  
Thrash of Ozello head  
into port across scenic  
Pirates Cove Bay after a  
day's fishing for mullet.



Mr John Henry DeBusk  
My father

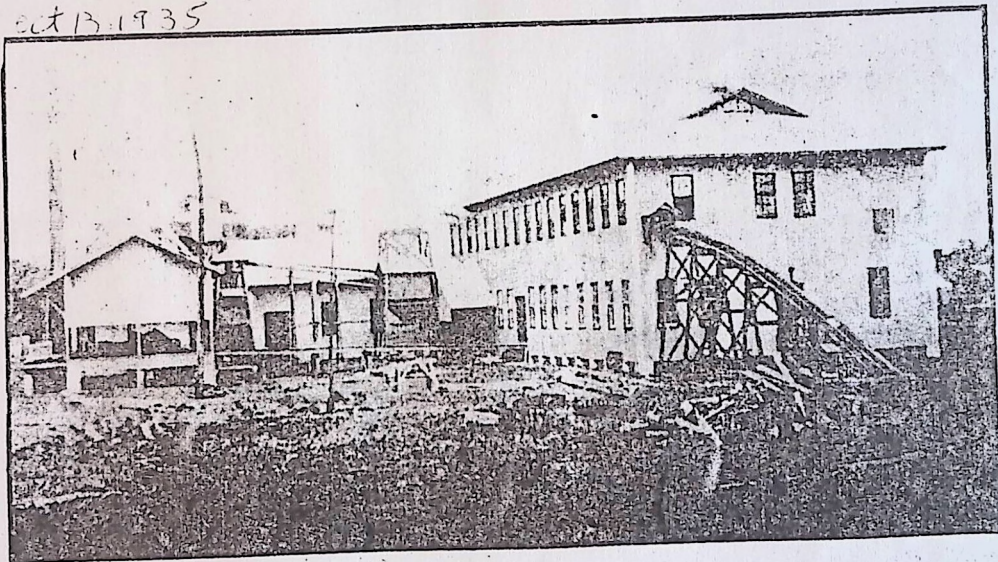


Mr. Joseph Edgar DeBusk



Island and remains of school as seen from the water.

Oct 13, 1935



### "The Good Old Days"

Pictured above is the old Houston and Liggett Cedar Mill in Crystal River. Cedar lumbering was a very prosperous industry around the turn of the century in the area and there were a number of mills in Crystal River. Citrus County has just celebrated its 98th birthday. Leading up to the county's 100th Birthday, the Chronicle will be publishing on a weekly basis, an old photo of

photos to go with "The Good Old Days" series. Photos submitted must be at least 25 years old. If you have a photo you think we would like to use, send it to us with your name, address and phone number in case we have any questions. We guarantee it will be returned. Mail it to the Citrus County Chronicle, Attention Tim Hess, Photo Editor, P.O. Box 1899, Inverness, Fla. 32651.



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