



Whelan joins Nutcracker Key West — Page 2C

On hoods and pirates

I had always hoped for the opportunity to stake out a neighborhood before committing to it. You know, a nice, clean area free of sex offenders, barking dogs and Satan worshippers. Naturally, there is no time for that and you can't always pick your neighbors. Thankfully, we found ourselves among a group of wonderful people smack dab in the middle of Lower Shark Key.

It was almost a year ago when we met with the sellers to go over some details, they were in the middle of a garage sale when I glanced the scene for a familiar face. That's when a visitor introduced herself as Michelle. "Oh," she said, "you might need this." She reached into her pocket and handed me a spare house key. This was my first indication that we had landed in a warm and friendly community. The kind where everyone knows and helps each other without even thinking about it. But I'm not sure I deserve this.

As a teenager, I wasn't the best neighbor to have around due to my penchant for bad behavior. BB guns, extremely loud music and garden variety chicanery were all part of my repertoire.

Now that I've got a few years behind me, it's a whole new ball game. For instance, if I caught some kid pulling some of my old stunts near my place, I'd probably end up on the Sheriff's Web site with charges ranging from petty assault to attempted murder. And speaking of the law, I'm loving all of our uniformed neighbors as well. We're talking sheriff deputies, city cops, wildlife officials, the whole gamut. This is obviously something I'm glad we lacked on our block back in the early '80s when I was on the loose. But these days, their cars are a welcomed sight.

Perhaps this is another sign of getting old, but these days I truly enjoy partying at or very near my home and Thanksgiving was no exception.

Jason and Mauriah Pepper opened their home to us all and had a 15-pounder frying away in the backyard when we arrived. This was in addition to the two conventionally basted birds, a picnic table full of side dishes and a Van Morrison CD filling the air. Without a doubt, there was plenty to give thanks for. With my parents back in town, the Keys natural beauty making a comeback and absolutely gorgeous weather, we are all truly blessed to live at or near the end of the road.

Enter the shameless segue. Why then is it necessary to continue bulldozing sensitive land? Why do we have a multiple-lot owning, oh, so pro-developmentally minded elected official accusing environmentalists of piracy? Perhaps Blackbeard himself should look inwards the next time he denigrates a group of citizens trying to salvage the natural beauty that brought so many of us here. From his ghost ship docked in "the dive capital of the world," this guy needn't look much farther than his own backyard to see the pathetically declining water quality and mainland-like traffic. I'll tell you, if Key Largo actually thinks they're the dive capital of anywhere, they're sadly mistaken. With the exception of areas around the Dry Tortugas, our reef is just about dead and the beaches are teeming with human fecal bacteria. So maybe he's right, more development must be the answer. The race to the bottom continues and leave it to Blackbeard to play the affordable housing card. What a joke. In my opinion, until the government or a philanthropic millionaire coughs up the cash to build affordable housing, it's simply not going to happen. Why? Because there's not enough money in it. That's reality.

Stay tuned in two weeks for the next Key Life combo-column tentatively titled "Why I love the Olive Garden and how I would have handled the Iraq War."

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SNAP SHOTS

Rob O'Neal

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10 QUESTIONS FOR ALAN S. MALTZ



MIKE HENTZ/The Citizen

Alan S. Maltz, photographed at his Duval Street Gallery. All other photos on this page and page 6 are from Maltz's new book 'Florida . . . Beyond the Blue Horizon.'



'FIRST LIGHT'

Photographer shares his view from 'Beyond the Blue Horizon'

BY TERRY SCHMIDA
Citizen Features Editor

Celebrated Florida photographer Alan S. Maltz will celebrate the publication of his latest coffee table book "Florida . . . Beyond the Blue Horizon" at a book-signing and reception from 5-8 p.m. Thursday, at his gallery, located at 1210 Duval St.

Maltz's previous books include "Key West Color," and "Miami, City of Dreams," and he has been the recipient of numerous state and national awards for his work.

Maltz recently took the time to answer 10 questions posed by the Key West Citizen.

THERE ARE MANY BEAUTIFUL AND MAGICAL PLACES IN FLORIDA BUT THE ONE I CHOOSE TO CALL HOME IS RIGHT HERE IN THE FLORIDA KEYS. THE LIGHT IS MAGICAL AND SO ARE THE PEOPLE. I AM GRATEFUL TO HAVE SUCH SUPPORT FOR WHAT I LOVE TO DO IN LIFE.

TERRY SCHMIDA: Describe the process that led to you becoming an art photographer.

ALAN S. MALTZ: My Journey which led me to become an art photographer borders on the mystic. I was attending my college graduation ceremony at Long Island University in New York. It was a beautiful June morning in 1970. Helen Hayes, the distinguished actress was addressing the audience. I must admit, my mind at that moment was not focused on what she was

saying. Instead, I was daydreaming about leaving for Europe the next day with two friends on a three month adventure.

Somewhere within this space and time a very powerful message came to me. It was like a revelation, hitting me like a ton of bricks. The content of the thought was "pick up a camera." Before this moment in time, I had never taken a picture, or had any ambition to do so. I took this incident to heart — right after the ceremony I went into

Manhattan and purchased a camera. It was a Miranda Sensor X. I asked the salesman what the best film was, he replied Kodachrome 25. I stocked up on the film and also picked up a "how to" Kodak manual on Photography 101. The next day I left for Europe as planned and on the plane I studied my little manual. Two days later I took my first photograph in Marseilles, France. This image, titled "Meeting in Marseilles" is exhibited proudly in my Key West Gallery and is one of my classic works.

I spent the rest of the summer with the camera. When I returned home and reviewed the results of my trip I realized I had found my calling in life. Thus started my love affair with camera. I am extremely grateful for this insight.

TS: What are your favorite subjects to photograph, and why?

ASM: My subjects of choice are nature and wildlife. I feel the most passion and inspiration when in the presence of nature. I also believe I have a special connection with creatures of nature. This goes to the core of who I am. Wildlife seem to pose right before me in the most magical way. There is a certain purity and simplicity in this realm which directly connects with my spirit.

TS: You make your home in the Florida Keys. Is this an artistic, lifestyle or business choice for you?

ASM: I have traveled the state in great detail for my new book, "Florida . . . Beyond the Blue Horizon." There are many beautiful and magical places in Florida but the one I choose to call home is right here in the Florida Keys. The light is magical and so are the people. I am grateful to have such support for what I love to do in life. It's all three . . .

TS: Your photographs are known for their vibrant colors. Have you experimented much with black and white photography?

ASM: As a matter of fact, I am entering the black and white world as we speak. I am starting off with a black and white slide film called Scala. I did experiment with black and white many years ago, but color expresses my total vision.

TS: Of all the accolades and awards you have received during your career, which are



'WAVES OF COLOR'

you the most proud of?

ASM: It is the one I am about to receive on Nov. 30, "The Official Wildlife Photographer for the State of Florida" by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission. It is a great feeling to be recognized on this level for something I am so passionate about and have been from the beginning.

TS: How has the business of fine art photography evolved since your arrival on the scene? Have advances in technology made your job easier or more complex?

ASM: When I dedicated my career to photography in 1986, fine art photography was in its infancy. As a matter of fact, it was not even considered an art form. The thought was — anyone can take a picture. Obviously, today, fine art photography has earned its place amongst the fine arts. As a result, I can now prosper as a fine art photographer. When I first started, I had to supplement my income with creative adver-



ABOVE, '13 STEPS.' AT RIGHT, 'ANCESTRAL HERITAGE.'

FROM PAGE 1



'PAINTING TWILIGHT'

Maltz

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tising and an occasional wedding.

The main point about advances in technology is that I am able to fine tune my work to a greater degree. Since all production is done in — house under my supervision, I have ultimate control of the final result. As a matter of fact, all pre-press production for my latest book was done in the Key West gallery. If you technically compare my previous books, "Key West Color," and "Miami City of Dreams," to "Florida . . . Beyond the Blue Horizon," the difference is obvious. This to me is critical and means everything, even if it was more of a challenge to get to that point. I am a firm believer in end results!

TS: Many of your images are so breathtaking, as to appear unreal. Are any of your images composites of more than one photograph? Are they cut out from the backgrounds?

ASM: This is not the norm, 99 percent of my work reflects the original as I captured it. There may be one or two images that were achieved as a result of sandwiching two slides together. These images are not in my main body of work. They were created more or less for experimentation.

For some of my images with black backgrounds, I may blacken a green leaf here and there to create a solid black background. Most of the black backgrounds are created using specific techniques in the field.

TS: In your literature, you say that you "direct a painstaking and time-consuming proofing process," to create a master image from the "raw digital file." Please describe this process. Does it involve Photoshop or some similar photo-retouching program?

ASM: The process starts with an original 35 millimeter slide that has been selected from editing a shoot. The image is then scanned by a very high resolution scanner. The raw scan is now in a digital format. In order to capture the color and feeling of the original slide, the raw file is worked on in Photoshop. You can't just scan the image and achieve greatness. The raw scan looks nothing like the original. It is very dark and muddy looking, although all the elements are there to mirror the original. That is where the proofing process comes in. It may take a day or two or a week or two to get it back to reflect the original. One thing is certain. I will never settle for anything that does not fit my vision.

TS: What advice do you have for aspir-

ing art photographers?

ASM: 1. Believe in yourself; be passionate about what you do or else find something else that you can be passionate about; take rejection lightly and try to learn from each experience; be open to criticism — good and bad; never give up; never show second best; always have your camera with you. These guidelines are the ones I use for my personal experience. My theme song — there is no strength where there is no struggle.

TS: What's next for Alan S. Maltz?

ASM: I am about to sign a multi-faceted contract with the Wildlife Foundation of Florida in collaboration with Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission. I look forward to developing this relationship — it is in this arena I see new growth and expression. Some of the aspects of this project will be redesigning some of the State's License Plates, capturing images of Panthers, Black Bears, and hard to find Wildlife, designing and producing a line of clothing and other products for the Foundation, holding workshops on wildlife photography and many more exciting opportunities.

This Thursday, Dec. 1, my gallery will host the first official book signing for my new book, "Florida . . . Beyond the Blue Horizon." I look forward to welcoming the community to this milestone. I will be publishing my next book, "Visions of Beauty . . . The Beaches of Fort Myers and Sanibel," scheduled for release in January 2007.

For more information on photographer Alan S. Maltz's upcoming book signing, call (305) 294-0005, e-mail visions@alanmaltz.com, or visit www.alanmaltz.com.



'PERSONAL SPACE'

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'POINT OF VIEW'