

"A GULF COAST JOURNAL"

MAY 2008

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>> THIS SPECIAL PRESENTATION WAS PRODUCED IN HIGH DEFINITION BY WEDU, TAMPA, ST. PETERSBURG, SARASOTA.

>>Jack Perkins: PADDLE THE MANGROVE TUNNELS WITH THE MAN WHO MAKES IT POSSIBLE.

MEET THE PUPS AND THE PEOPLE WHO CREATE GUIDE DOGS.

>> THERE WE GO!"

>>Jack Perkins: PLAY GOLF WITH PEOPLE YOU MIGHT NOT THINK COULD PLAY GOLF.

>> YES, YES.

>>Jack Perkins: AND VISIT WITH THE MAN WHO TAKES CARE OF A GRAND HISTORIC MANSION ON THIS VOLUME OF "A GULF COAST JOURNAL."

>> THIS WEDU PRODUCTION IS EXCLUSIVELY BROUGHT TO YOU THROUGH A GENEROUS GRANT FROM THE GULF COAST COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF VENICE, BUILDING STRONG COMMUNITIES, LEADERSHIP, PARTNERSHIP, AND ENDOWED PHILANTHROPY.

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>>Jack Perkins: DEAR JOURNAL, WHEN I WAS A KID -- OH, I KNOW THAT WAS A WHILE AGO, JOURNAL, THANKS FOR REMINDING ME -- MY FAVORITE CHILDREN'S BOOK, I THINK, WAS BY AN AUTHOR NAMED WATTY PIPER.

THIS IS BEFORE DR. SEUSS, OF COURSE.

THE BOOK WAS ENTITLED "THE LITTLE ENGINE THAT COULD" ABOUT A LOCOMOTIVE FACING A VERY STEEP HILL AND SAYING "I THINK I CAN, I THINK I CAN, I THINK I CAN" AND THEN FINALLY ACHIEVING THE IMPOSSIBLE, "I KNEW I COULD, I KNEW I COULD, I KNEW I COULD."

WELL, THAT IS THE SPIRIT OF THIS MONTH'S GULF COAST JOURNAL. ABOUT PEOPLE WHO CAN AND PEOPLE WHO BY WHAT THEY DO, MAKE IT POSSIBLE THAT OTHERS CAN.

LET US START WITH A TALE OF PEOPLE AND PUPPIES.

>> ALL RIGHT.

>> BARON, THIS IS YOUR NEW MOM AND DAD.

>>Jack Perkins: THIS IS HOW IT BEGINS.

EIGHT-WEEK-OLD PUP MEETING ITS NEW FOSTER PARENTS FOR THE FIRST TIME.

YOUNG, INNOCENT, BRED TO FOLLOW IN THE PAW PRINTS OF MANY GREAT DOGS BEFORE IT.

>> THEY ARE SUCH ANGELS.

>>Jack Perkins: ANGELS, WELL, SO ARE THE PUPPY RAISERS WHO GIVE TIME AND LOVE TO RAISE A PUP, ONLY THEN TO GIVE IT UP SO IT CAN BE A SOUTHEASTERN GUIDE DOG.

>> OUR PUPPY RAISERS ARE VERY IMPORTANT.

WE COULD NOT DO WHAT WE DO WITHOUT THEM.

THE AMOUNT OF TIME, THE EXPENSE TO THEM PERSONALLY, THEY ARE PRICELESS.

>> GOOD MORNING!

>>Jack Perkins: FOR THE NEXT YEAR-AND-A-HALF, BARON, A HUNGARIAN VIZSLA, WILL LEARN BASIC OBEDIENCE FROM HIS FOSTER PARENTS.

>> WE'RE STARTING WITH THE BLANK BLACKBOARD.

WE'RE GOING TO WRITE UPON HIS SLATE AS HE GETS OLDER AND OLDER AND OLDER.

RIGHT NOW, HE'S JUST A LITTLE TINY LOVE SPONGE, AND WE'LL CURVE HIM INTO GOOD BEHAVIOR.

>>Jack Perkins: BARON BRIEFLY SHARES HIS NEW HOME WITH 17-MONTH-OLD KING, WHO IS ABOUT TO RETURN TO SOUTHEASTERN FOR THE NEXT PHASE OF TRAINING.

>> USUALLY THERE ARE A COUPLE OF WEEKS IN BETWEEN, BUT THIS TIME, THE WAY THEY WERE BORN, IT WAS TIME FOR ME TO TAKE BARON.

SO WE TOOK HIM, AND WE'VE BEEN FUNCTIONING OKAY.

>> LET'S GO, LET'S GO.

WALK, WALK.

>>Jack Perkins: LORRAINE AND THOR ERICKSON HAVE BEEN FOSTER PARENTING WITH SOUTHEASTERN FOR 20 YEARS.

BARON AND KING ARE PUPS NUMBER 16 AND 17.

>> WHAT A GOOD BOY!

>>Jack Perkins: THEY GROW ATTACHED, YET THE REWARDS KEEP THE PUPPY DOOR REVOLVING.

>> YOU START OUT WITH THAT MISSION IN YOUR HEART THAT THIS IS FOR SOMEBODY ELSE, AND YOU ARE JUST A TOOL, AND YOU'RE WORKING AND WORKING AND WORKING, JUST LIKE A FOSTER FAMILY. JUST THE THOUGHT OF GIVING SOMEBODY THEIR INDEPENDENCE AND THEIR SAFE TRAVEL IS JUST HEARTWARMING.

>>Jack Perkins: FOR KING NOW, IT'S OFF TO DOGGY COLLEGE.

A ROAD LORRAINE HAS TRAVELED MANY TIMES BEFORE.

>> I DON'T THINK ABOUT IT BECAUSE THAT'S A BITTERSWEET AND IT'S ON THE NEGATIVE SIDE.

EVERYTHING THAT WE DO, WE TRY TO DO POSITIVELY.

AND THE DOGS ALSO FEEL YOUR BODY, YOUR EMOTIONS, SO EVERYTHING WE DO WITH THE DOG IS POSITIVE.

>>Jack Perkins: IT TAKES ALMOST TWO YEARS AND \$40,000 TO PREPARE A SUCCESSFUL GUIDE DOG TEAM.

DONATIONS COVER THE COST AT NO EXPENSE TO THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED STUDENT.

MORE THAN 200 PUPPY RAISERS HELP SOUTHEASTERN GUIDE DOGS FULFILL ITS MISSION.

>> WE HAVEN'T BEEN IN A SHORT SUPPLY OF RAISERS, THANK GOODNESS.

THERE ARE A LOT OF PEOPLE OUT THERE THAT WANT TO REALLY HELP OUT SOMEONE IN NEED.

>>Jack Perkins: STILL, IT'S HARD TO LET GO.

>> YOU'VE BEEN A GOOD BOY.

BE A GOOD BOY NOW.

GO MAKE MOMMY AND DADDY PROUD.

>> YEP, GO MAKE US PROUD.

>>Jack Perkins: IN SIX MONTHS, KING WILL BE FULLY TRAINED
AND MATCHED WITH A CANDIDATE.

>> I DID AND MY HUSBAND DID EVERYTHING THAT WE COULD DO TO
GIVE HIM THE CHANCE.

NOW IT'S UP TO HIM.

>>Jack Perkins: AS LORRAINE SENDS HER 16th PUPPY TO DOGGY
COLLEGE.

>> I KNOW HE'S GOING TO DO GOOD.

>>Jack Perkins: ROBERT AND MARY LAUER ANXIOUSLY AWAIT THEIR
SECOND PUPPY ROBBIE TO WALK THE GRADUATION ROUTE.

>> THAT'S HIM.

HERE HE COMES.

>>Jack Perkins: THIS IS PUPPY RAISER DAY, A DAY WHEN FOSTER
PARENTS WITNESS THE METAMORPHOSIS FROM PLAYFUL PUPPY TO
CONFIDENT GUIDE DOG.

>> IT'S LIKE WATCHING YOUR CHILD WALK DOWN THE STAGE WITH
THEIR DIPLOMA AND THEIR GRADUATION UNIFORM.

>> HE'S ON TODAY.

>>Jack Perkins: PROUD MOMENT FOR FOSTER PARENTS.

>> THIS IS THE PAYOFF.

THIS IS WHAT MAKES IT ALL WORTHWHILE, TO SEE THAT PUPPY THAT YOU PUT SO MUCH WORK AND LOVE INTO, YOU KNOW, GOING OUT THERE IN THE WORLD, IT'S LIKE, YOU KNOW, LIKE HAVING A KID WHO GRADUATED AT THE TOP OF THEIR CLASS.

>>Jack Perkins: ANOTHER PAYOFF, THE LONG-AWAITED REUNION WITH THAT PUPPY.

>> WE'RE SO PROUD OF YOU.

YOU ARE A GOOD GUY.

>>Jack Perkins: THE LAUERS EMBRACE THIS MOMENT.

JEREMY BARNHART, WHO LOST HIS EYESIGHT IN A CAR ACCIDENT, EMBRACES HIS FUTURE THANKS TO ROBBIE.

>> HE'S GOING TO COMPLETELY CHANGE MY LIFE.

I HAVE A LOT MORE CONFIDENCE OF GETTING OUT.

AND I FEEL LIKE THERE'S NO PLACE THAT I CAN'T GO NOW.

>> I HOPE THAT JEREMY WILL EMBRACE THE WORLD AGAIN AFTER THE TRAGEDY THAT HE FACED.

AND I THINK ROBBIE WILL HELP HIM DO THAT.

GIVE HIM THE CONFIDENCE TO DO THAT.

>>Jack Perkins: THE END OF ONE CHAPTER FOR THE PUPPY RAISERS, THE BEGINNING OF A NEW LIFE FOR THE GRADUATE AND HIS PROUD NEW GUIDE DOG.

>>Jack Perkins: PEOPLE WHO CAN, PEOPLE WHO HELP OTHERS SO THAT THEY CAN.

A LOT OF GOLFERS ALONG THE GULF COAST, BUT AS MUCH AS THEY LOVE THE GAME, THERE ARE SOME GOLFERS WHO WOULDN'T BE ABLE

TO PLAY IT WERE IT NOT FOR THE HELP OF OTHERS.

>> THANKS, CHRIS.

>>Jack Perkins: MARK TWAIN CALLED GOLF "A GOOD WALK SPOILED."

WELL, FOR BETTY DIMMICK, THERE IS NO SUCH THING.

>> OH, NOT BAD.

>> VERY NICE.

>> I HAVE MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS, AND I'M IN MY 30th YEAR WITH IT.

I REALLY LOST THE USE OF MY LEGS.

I CAN STAND.

I CAN WALK WITH THE WALKER, BUT WHEN I'M HITTING A GOLF CLUB, I DON'T HAVE THE BALANCE OR THE STABILITY TO STAND AND ADDRESS IT.

I NEED MY HELPER TO PUT THE BALL IN THE CORRECT SPOT.

THANK YOU SO MUCH.

>>Jack Perkins: GARY ALDERSON HAS A SIMILAR STORY.

>> WITH THE MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS THAT I HAVE, IT JUST GOT MY LEGS SO TIRED, I JUST COULDN'T WALK.

>>Jack Perkins: THEY CAN'T WALK, BUT THEY CAN STILL GOLF.

THANKS TO AN ORGANIZATION BASED IN SARASOTA CALLED THE ADAPTIVE GOLF FOUNDATION OF AMERICA.

>> WHAT REALLY GOT ME INVOLVED RIGHT OFF THE BAT WAS THE INTEREST OF HELPING PEOPLE GET BACK ON COURSE IN TERMS OF GOLF AND IN TERMS OF LIFE.

IT'S OKAY.

DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT.

>>Jack Perkins: DAVE WINDSOR IS THE PROGRAM'S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR.

ONCE A WEEK, HIS GOLFERS GATHER AT BOBBY JONES GOLF CLUB IN SARASOTA.

>> EASY.

>>Jack Perkins: THEY GET PRACTICE.

>> YES.

>>Jack Perkins: INSTRUCTION.

>> JUST FEEL THOSE SOFT HANDS.

>>Jack Perkins: AND THEN THEY GET ON THE COURSE AND PLAY.

>> WHEN WE START AN ADAPTIVE GOLF PROGRAM, WE WILL DO WHAT IT TAKES TO GET SOMEONE BACK ON THE GOLF COURSE.

>>Jack Perkins: FOR PEOPLE WHO CAN STAND, IT CAN BE LEARNING TO CONTROL THE CLUB WITH ONE HAND.

FOR THOSE WHO CAN'T STAND, IT CAN BE GETTING A SPECIAL CART THAT WILL EITHER LIFT THEM UP OR LET THEM PLAY SITTING DOWN.

>> ALL PEOPLE LOOK AT THEM AND THEY SEE YOU ON THE GREEN AND THEY CAN'T BELIEVE IT.

>> PEOPLE ARE VERY INTERESTED IN WHAT WE ARE DOING.

THEY ARE VERY INTERESTED IN WATCHING US, WITH THE USE OF THESE CARTS.

AND VERY COMPLIMENTARY TO THE FACT THAT, HEY, YOU CAN REALLY HIT THAT BALL.

>> IT MAY JUST GET THEIR HAND-EYE COORDINATION GOING.

IT MAY JUST GET THEM INTO MORE OF AN UPRIGHT POSITION TO GET A LITTLE MORE TURN, A LITTLE MORE MOBILITY.

>> THERE WE GO!

>>Jack Perkins: THE THERAPEUTIC BENEFIT IS ONE OF ITS SELLING POINTS AS WINDSOR WORKS TO EXPAND THE PROGRAM, WHICH HAS CHAPTERS IN FIVE STATES.

AN ADAPTIVE GOLF PROGRAM IN TAMPA RUNS IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE VETERANS HOSPITAL.

>> BEAUTIFUL!

>> I BELIEVE THAT ADAPTIVE GOLF OR GOLF, AS IS ANY SPORT, IS THERAPEUTIC.

ANYTIME YOU CAN INTRODUCE SOMEONE WITH A DISABILITY TO A SPORT, IT'S THE ENTIRE MIND, BODY AND SOUL CONCEPT.

>> THE WAY MY LEFT LEG IS, I CAN PUT WEIGHT ON MY RIGHT BUT NOT ON MY LEFT.

IF THIS WASN'T HERE, I WOULDN'T BE TAKING A FEW CUTS, SO I FEEL PRETTY LUCKY.

>>Jack Perkins: LISTENING TO THEM, YOU SENSE THAT THEY ALSO FEEL SOMETHING ELSE WHEN THEY ARE OUT THERE.

THAT THEY ARE NOT ALONE, AND THAT THEIR DISABILITIES DO NOT DEFINE THEM.

>> RIGHT ON LINE!

>> IT'S BEEN WONDERFUL TO BE BACK OUT ON THE GOLF COURSE, AND TO BE DOING SOMETHING WHICH I DEARLY LOVED HAS GIVEN ME

A SENSE OF NORMALCY, A PIECE OF NORMALCY BACK WHICH I HAD TO GIVE UP FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS AGO.

>> THAT'S IT, BETTY.

>>Jack Perkins: A GOOD WALK SPOILED?

I FIGURED MARK TWAIN ONLY SAID THAT BECAUSE HE COULDN'T DO THIS.

>> YEP, IT'S RIGHT EDGE OF THE CUP.

YES!

THAT WAS A GOOD ROLL!

>>Jack Perkins: IF SOME CHAUVINIST EVER TELLS YOU THAT HOUSEKEEPING IS A WOMAN'S WORK, YOU SET THAT POOR FOOL STRAIGHT.

YOU TELL HIM ABOUT THE MAN WHO KEEPS HOUSE AT THE GULF COAST'S MOST HISTORICALLY MAGNIFICENT HOME.

HIS NAME IS RON McCARTY, AND HE LOOKS AFTER A HOUSE OF HISTORY.

A FIVE-STORY, 56-ROOM VENETIAN PALACE THAT SPARKLES ALONG THE SHORE OF SARASOTA BAY.

RON McCARTY IS THE KEEPER OF CA'D'ZAN, THE WINTER HOME BUILT IN 1926 BY CIRCUS KING JOHN RINGLING AND HIS WIFE MABLE.

>> I VERY MUCH FEEL THAT THEIR SPIRITS ARE STILL IN THE HOUSE.

I THINK IT'S A VERY POSITIVE FEELING.

I DON'T KNOW IF IT'S A SPIRIT AS A GHOST OR ANYTHING, BUT I

FEEL THE ENERGY THAT IT'S VERY POSITIVE, AND I THINK THEY STILL ARE VERY MUCH ALIVE IN THIS HOUSE.

>>Jack Perkins: WITH HIS DEATH IN 1936, JOHN RINGLING WILLED THE MAGNIFICENT CA'D'ZAN, A PRICELESS ART MUSEUM AND 66 ACRES OF LUSH GROUNDS TO THE STATE OF FLORIDA.

AH, BUT THE YEARS AND THE ELEMENTS EVENTUALLY TOOK THEIR TOLL ON CA'D'ZAN.

>> BEFORE 1995, THE HOUSE WAS REALLY DETERIORATING.

THE FABRICS ON THE WALLS WERE BEING PEELED OFF.

IT WAS IN VERY POOR CONDITION.

VERY SAD TIME PERIOD FOR US.

>>Jack Perkins: AS CURATOR, RON McCARTY'S PRIDE AND JOY WAS OVERSEEING THE 15 MILLION-DOLLAR, SIX-YEAR RESTORATION OF CA'D'ZAN.

>> STARTED IN 1995 AND ENDED IN 2001, AND WE REOPENED IN 2002.

>>Jack Perkins: WHEN CA'D'ZAN, WHICH MEANS HOUSE OF JOHN, REOPENED FOR PUBLIC TOURS, McCARTY KNEW HIS WORK HAD ONLY BEGUN.

>> LOOKS GOOD.

>>Jack Perkins: MAINTAINING A PLACE LIKE THIS IS A NEVER-ENDING CHORE.

>> THIS IS ONE OF THE COPPER DOWNSPOUTS THAT WE HAVE.

THIS WAS ATTACHED TO THE SIDE OF THE CA'D'ZAN FROM THE SECOND STORY DOWN.

YOU CAN SEE THAT WE HAVE WATER INTRUSION COMING INTO THE BUILDING FROM DIFFERENT AREAS.

>>Jack Perkins: THE WATER SEEPING INTO CRACKS BEHIND THE GUTTER WENT UNDETECTED UNTIL IT REACHED THE INTERIOR OF THE GOLD BEDROOM.

>> AND YOU CAN SEE THAT WE'LL HAVE TO CORRECT THE PLASTER ON THE CEILING AS WELL AS THE WALL ITSELF.

AND WE HAVE ARTISANS THAT CAN DO THIS.

>>Jack Perkins: KEEPING CA'D'ZAN WATERTIGHT IS A CONSTANT BATTLE.

THE PAINTED SURFACES, THE DECORATIVE CLADDING, THE 180 STEEL CASEMENT WINDOWS ARE ALWAYS UNDER ATTACK BY THE WIND, THE RAIN, AND THE SUN.

>> YOU HAVE TO SANDBLAST ALL OF THE RUST OFF AND REPAINT IT SO THAT IT WILL PREVENT IT FROM MIGRATING DEEPER INTO THE STEEL.

EVERY ASPECT OF THE HOUSE HAS SO MUCH MAINTENANCE.

>>Jack Perkins: BEFORE THE DOORS OPEN IN THE MORNING, CA'D'ZAN IS A WHIRLWIND OF CLEANING AND DUSTING.

BUT THERE'S ONE RESPONSIBILITY THE CURATOR OF THE CA'D'ZAN WILL NOT DELEGATE.

TAKING SPECIAL CARE OF THE RINGLING'S LAVISH FURNISHINGS.

>> WELL, ALL THE FURNITURE PRIMARILY HAS EITHER UPHOLSTERY OF WOOL OR SILK.

AND WITH THOSE FABRICS, IT'S A NATURAL FIBER.

THE DUST IS YOUR WORST ENEMY.

IT GETS DOWN INTO THE ACTUAL CORE OF THE FABRIC.

AND USING THE HORSEHAIR BRUSH, YOU ACTUALLY PULL ALL OF THAT DUST THAT WILL BREAK DOWN THE ACTUAL FIBERS IF YOU LEAVE IT.

IF YOU CAN PULL THAT OUT OF THE FABRIC, IT WILL LAST SO MUCH LONGER.

IT'S VERY NECESSARY IF YOU HAVE ANY KIND OF FINE FABRICS.

>>Jack Perkins: FINE FABRICS ARE ESSENTIAL TO CA'D'ZAN'S OPULENCE.

IN THE GRANDEUR OF THEIR WINTER MANSION, JOHN AND MABLE ENTERTAINED THE RICH AND FAMOUS.

>> WELL, HONESTLY, I CLEAN EVERYTHING AS FAR AS ANY OF THE OBJECTS IN THE HOUSE.

FOR HOLIDAYS, I'M SURE IT TAKES ME POSSIBLY A FULL WEEK TO CLEAN THE SILVER THAT'S PUT ON DISPLAY, BUT IT'S QUITE FUN.

WHEN YOU LOVE A CERTAIN TYPE OF OBJECT, IT IS NOT WORK.

>>Jack Perkins: IF YOU THINK THE RINGLING'S SILVER TIFFANY FLATWARE IS EXTRAVAGANT, CHECK OUT THEIR DOCK.

IT WAS RECENTLY RESTORED AFTER YEARS OF STORM DAMAGE.

>> WE HAVE SIX DIFFERENT TYPES OF MARBLE THAT WE HAVE SEARCHED ALL OVER THE WORLD TO ACTUALLY MATCH THE HISTORIC MARBLE THAT WAS HERE.

F.E.M.A. GAVE US \$184,000, AND IT ACTUALLY HAS RESTORED THE ENTIRE FRONT LOWER DOCK.

>>Jack Perkins: AS THE LAST OF THE GILDED AGE MANSIONS, JOHN

AND MABLE RINGLING'S WINTER HOME REPRESENTS THE GRANDEUR,
THE ELEGANCE, THE FREE STYLE OF LIVING THAT FLOURISHED
DURING THE ROARING '20s.

THE KEEPER OF CA'D'ZAN HOPES TO KEEP IT THAT WAY.

>>Jack Perkins: HERE IN THE MANGROVES ALONG THE WATERFRONT,
WE'VE BEEN TALKING ABOUT PEOPLE WHO CAN.

WELL, WE SAVED OUR FAVORITE TILL LAST.

HERE IS A MAN I THINK YOU'RE GOING TO LOVE.

WE CALL HIM SIMPLY "MANGROVE MAN."

THE SERENITY, THE SOLITUDE OF KAYAKING.

NATURE AT ARM'S LENGTH.

BEAUTY AT EYE LEVEL.

THE SOOTHING SOUND OF THE PADDLE.

AT GRANDE TOURS OF PLACIDA, KAYAKERS ENJOY THE TRANQUILITY
OF THESE WATERS AND SOMETHING EXTRA, THANKS TO THE
DEDICATION OF ONE MAN.

>> PRETTY INTERESTING.

KIND OF ECCENTRIC.

>> PRETTY HARD TO KEEP UP WITH HIM.

>> I TRIM OFF SOME OF THESE JUST TO KEEP MAKING A CANOPY.

>> JUST A KIND, GENTLE PERSON.

>> THERE ARE TWO ENTRANCES TO THE TRAIL.

WE'RE COMING UP ON ONE OF THEM NOW.

>>Jack Perkins: ED WOOLVERTON IS PLACIDA'S MANGROVE MAN,
OFFICIAL KEEPER OF THE BEAUTIFULLY SECLUDED MANGROVE TUNNELS

OF GASPARILLA SOUND.

>> FIND SOMETHING TO TIE MYSELF TO HERE.

>>Jack Perkins: ED HAS BEEN MANICURING THESE WATERY TRAILS ALONG CATFISH CREEK PENINSULA FOR MORE THAN 30 YEARS.

HE FIRST DISCOVERED THEM BACK IN 1975.

>> SO I JUST STARTED EXPLORING THEM, AND THAT'S WHAT I DID A GOOD PART OF MY TIME WAS JUST EXPLORING.

AT THAT TIME, THERE WAS PRACTICALLY NO TRIMMING OR CUTTING NEEDED TO BE DONE.

>>Jack Perkins: THE NARROW CANALS FORMED BACK IN THE '50s WHEN THE LAND WAS DREDGED FOR MOSQUITO CONTROL.

>> AND IT WAS ORIGINALLY MOSTLY SAND FLATS, BUT AS SOON AS THEY DREDGED IT, THE TIDE BROUGHT IN MANGROVES, AND THEN THE MANGROVES GREW UP.

SO IT'S NOW COVERED WITH MANGROVES.

>>Jack Perkins: FOR YEARS, THE TUNNEL REMAINED UNKNOWN TO KAYAKERS.

ED DIDN'T EXACTLY SHARE.

>> SO I DID IT ALL FOR MY OWN ENTERTAINMENT HERE FOR YEARS, UNTIL I DECIDED THAT KAYAKERS AND CANOEISTS WOULD LOVE TO KNOW ABOUT THIS, TOO.

>>Jack Perkins: AND THEY DO.

>> IT'S A VERY UNIQUE PLACE TO GO.

IT KIND OF REMINDS ME OF WHAT IT WOULD HAVE BEEN LIKE WHEN THE CALUSA INDIANS WERE HERE BEFORE THE 1500s.

>>Jack Perkins: THE TUNNELS ARE REALLY SPECIAL, COCOONING KAYAKERS FROM CIVILIZATION AND SUN.

>> TUNNELS, YOU CAN GO FOR UPWARDS TO HALF A MILE OR A MILE BEING COMPLETELY IN THE SHADE A GOOD PART OF THE WAY.

THERE ARE ALWAYS THINGS GOING ON BACK THERE.

MANGROVE CRABS TO, I SUPPOSE I SHOULDN'T MENTION IT, OCCASIONALLY YOU SEE A SNAKE.

>>Jack Perkins: KEEPING THE TUNNELS PRUNED IN FLORIDA HEAT IS STRENUOUS WORK FOR ANYONE, AN EVEN BIGGER JOB FOR A MAN, AS ED IS, IN HIS 90s.

>> WELL, YOU'LL NEVER GET TO BE MY AGE IF YOU DON'T PUT IN A LOT OF EXERCISE.

SO SOME DAYS I'M DOING IT EVERY DAY AND THEN SOMETIMES FOR A WEEK OR TWO WEEKS, THERE'S NOT ENOUGH WATER IN THERE TO GET IN THERE WITH A BOAT.

>>Jack Perkins: THERE'S NO SALARY.

GRATITUDE IS PAID IN TRIBUTE ALONG THE TRIBUTARIES.

>> LAST YEAR, THEY GAVE ME BIG RECOGNITION OVER IN PUNTA GORDA.

SAID I WAS ONE OF THREE MOST INFLUENTIAL PEOPLE IN CHARLOTTE COUNTY FOR TOURISM.

WHICH TO ME WAS RIDICULOUS BECAUSE I NEVER DID ANYTHING THAT I THOUGHT TO ENCOURAGE TOURISM.

>>Jack Perkins: INSTEAD, ED IS DRIVEN BY FORCES BEYOND ANY TANGIBLE REWARD.

>> I GET PAID FOR IT IN PLEASURE.

WHY DO YOU DO THINGS IF IT ISN'T FOR FUN?

>>Jack Perkins: FUN SEEMS TO BE ED'S MAJOR ACHIEVEMENT.

A TRUE SNOWBIRD, ED SPENDS PART OF THE YEAR IN MINNESOTA,
PART IN FLORIDA WITH HIS GRANDSON DAN.

IN BETWEEN, HE TRAVELS THE WORLD.

>> I WAS A DEDICATED BACKPACKER FOR MANY YEARS.

I WALKED A MONTH ON THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL.

>>Jack Perkins: HE ONCE WENT TO FINLAND IN SEARCH OF AN
UNUSUAL NOTION.

>> I WENT TO FINLAND.

I WANTED TO LEARN HOW TO MAKE BIRCH BARK SHOES.

I LEARNED HOW TO MAKE BIRCH BARK STRIP WEAVING, BUT MAKING
THE SHOES WAS QUITE DIFFICULT.

I FINALLY FOUND AN OLD MAN WHO SHOWED ME HOW TO DO IT.

>>Jack Perkins: IT'S NO SURPRISE THAT THE LIFELONG EXPLORER
WOULD DISCOVER A TREASURE IN HIS OWN BACKYARD.

>> THE TUNNELS GRADUALLY GOT MORE AND MORE SO EVERY YEAR AS
I WORKED AND TRIMMED ON THEM.

I WOULD TRIM THE LOWER BRANCHES SO IT WASN'T NEAR THE TUNNEL
LIKE IT IS NOW.

>>Jack Perkins: ED DOES NOT DESTROY THE MANGROVES, WHICH IS
AGAINST THE LAW, BUT HE TRIMS AND PRUNES TO CLEAR THE
PEACEFUL PATHS.

>> NOBODY HAS EVER GIVEN ME ANY TROUBLE ABOUT THAT.

IN FACT, THE COUNTY AND THE STATE SEEM DELIGHTED THAT I'VE KEPT THESE TRAILS OPEN.

A LOT OF PEOPLE GET A LOT OF PLEASURE OUT OF IT.

>>Jack Perkins: AND HE GETS PLEASURE FROM IT, TOO.

>> WELL, MOST PEOPLE DON'T MAKE IT TO 91 BECAUSE THEY GIVE UP AT 65 OR 70 AND START SITTING IN AN EASY CHAIR, AND THE OLD SAYING, YOU'VE GOT TO USE IT OR LOSE IT, AND THAT CERTAINLY IS THE TRUTH.

I HOPE I'M DOING IT UNTIL I'M A HUNDRED.

>>Jack Perkins: THE WAY ED WOOLVERTON IS GOING, I WOULDN'T BET AGAINST HIM.

>>Jack Perkins: OFTEN AS WE END OUR PROGRAMS, WE GIVE YOU PICTURES OF BIRDS.

WELL, THIS TIME, MAYBE OUR FAVORITE BIRD, A BIRD THAT ACCORDING TO FOSSIL RECORDS HAS BEEN AROUND FOR OVER TWO MILLION YEARS.

THE SANDHILL CRANE.

EVER DELIGHTFUL TO SEE.

REALTIME CAPTIONING BY AMERICAPTION, INC.

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