



# Parrots in Paradise

Reported by Rob Camblin

Key West 2011

**A**s we entered the Florida Keys, after a relatively uneventful drive from Kansas City, the warm breezes and bright sunlight beamed us onward to our destination. We took our time and enjoyed various stops along US 1 that we had discovered over the years. Arriving in Key West, we found our accommodations at the Blue Marlin to be more than adequate and very comfortable as usual.

We quickly got unpacked and made contact with Fred and Cindy Skomp, the co-hosts, again, for the Gathering. We finalized all the last-minute items and prepared to welcome all to Key West with some food and refreshment.

The group this year, like those in the past, consisted of previous and newbie attendees, which makes for a great mix of folks. The previous attendees always make the newbies feel at home and give them insight into the various things to do during their stay. We discussed the upcoming festivities and adjusted as needed to accommodate the group.

Our first evening was filled with stories of everyone's various adventures from home to the gathering and ended with everyone enjoying the evening breezes and moonlit sky.



Top Bowlers (L-R): Stace Arnston, Tom Fant, Tommie Camblin, Jim Ferguson

Tuesday brought the now famous Bocce Ball tournament, which has become a mainstay of the annual gathering. The day was mild with lots of sun, warm temperatures and hot competition. Each team, drawn by lot, did its best to win the tournament, and the competition led to hotly contested games. After the tournament, we gathered at Fred and Cindy's pool for refreshment and food. This year's winning team members were Tommie Camblin, Stace Arnston, Jim Ferguson and Tom Fant.

Wednesday began with our pilgrimage to visit and enjoy one of the oldest establishments in the Keys: the No Name Pub



The Parade Boys

on Big Pine Key, home to the elusive and endangered Key Deer. All agreed that this is a place that you have to visit. Situated off the beaten track and just before you cross the bridge to No Name Key, the No Name Pub has been a fixture since 1935 and is listed as the oldest Bar in the Keys. Its history is very colorful, and we were treated to various stories about its history. We also enjoyed time to find out a little about each other and what brought us to the Keys.

We continued on Wednesday evening with the annual Key West British Car Club membership meeting at Shannon's Pub in Key West. There we conducted the usual business that all clubs must do, which consisted of officer elections, status of the treasury and the initiation of new members. I'm proud to announce that Mr. James (Jim) Ferguson has assumed the duties of Vice Admiral. At this writing, all other officers remain the same.

Thursday was a day to prepare for our participation in the world's longest parade, stretching from the Atlantic to the Gulf and celebrating the successful cessation of

the Florida Keys from the United States. Or, as most know it, the Conch Republic Festival and Parade. Our theme this year for the group was "Parrots in Paradise," and our cars and persons were decorated appropriately. The parade was also the final official event of this year's gathering.

I'd like to thank all that made this year's event, to include Stace and Joanne Arnston, our long distance winners, (2240 miles, one way); Jim and Dottie Ferguson, Best of Gathering Award; Dave and Ellen Massey on their recent nuptials; Charles and JoAnn Wiggins on making the time before heading to their summer home in Maine; Mark and Cindy Michalak for coming back, along with Bill and Niki Davidson, Gerry and Tracy Cahill, and Brian and Linda Hoffman from the KC area, in making the trip; Tom Fant for helping to document the event; Bruce Zivic and John Albright for bringing what I believe is the first Twin Cam to a Key West event; and Doug, Sarah, Shirlee, and Richard Wells who, we hope, have recovered from his injury that occurred while at the gathering. And a very special thank you to Fred and Cindy Skomp for all their efforts in making this the best event in North America!

In closing, I'd like to thank all the participants, not only from this year's event, but also to all who have participated in the past. While Tommie and I have been fortunate enough to attend each event, we know that for most, that is not always possible. We have found and made many new friends and enjoyed many adventures along the way. I hope this gathering continues to be an annual event so that more can enjoy what the Keys has to offer. I know I'll be back!



The Parade Girls