Summary of the history of 2209 Wilton Drive -- from the Wilton Manors "Town Crier"

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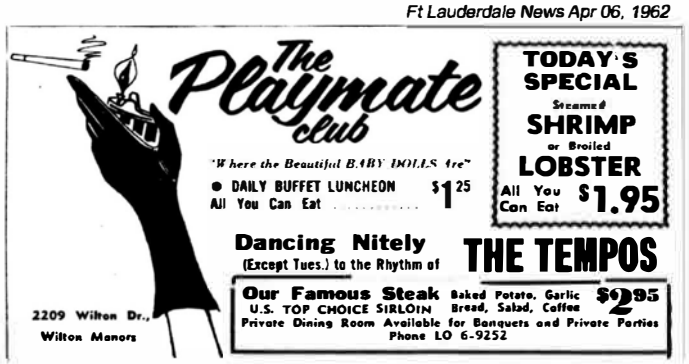
Exploring the history of 2209 Wilton Drive—*the early years*

Manor Market opened at 2209 Wilton Drive in May of 1948 as a semi-open-air market with sawdust floors. It was Wilton Manors' first grocery; and had the first telephone in town. In 1952 owners Lamar Braddy and Frank Starling enclosed and expanded the building and added off-street parking in the rear. Mr. Braddy was known for his elaborate promotions to get customers in the store. But it wasn't enough to match the competition from chain supermarkets like Food Fair, Grand Union and Stevens that had opened in the Manors. Manor Market went out of business in 1959. Braddy and Starling re-purposed part of the building that same year as the ***Flame Restaurant***. But, despite the elaborate signage and good initial reviews, it only lasted something over a year.

In early 1961, Clayton Leaver, Al Hagen's contractor, and his wife Lou, today considered to be the matriarch of the Woman's Club, envisioned (for reasons uncertain) re-opening the venue as a Hugh Hefner-esq private supper club—***The Playmate Club***. While the key club concept was quickly dropped, other similarities remained. Cocktail waitresses were known as "Baby Dolls". Want-ads indicated that they must *"...be attractive, age 23-32 [and] wear shorts to interview"*. A 1962 Sun-Sentinel review noted: *"The Baby Dolls, who provide service and good viewing, engage in an impromptu twist number, led by Marie Martin, whose costume, ringed in fringe, gives the dance extra dimensions. The gal also shakes a cocktail while she twists, and serves it at ringside…"*. The review went on to praise *"the Playmate's excellence as a dining and dancing spot"*. The Playmate Club lasted until 1965—to be replaced by the **Back Door-A-Go-Go** lounge. More on that and later clubs in the next Town Crier.



Questions or comments? Contact Ron and Mary Ulm at wmhs@WMHistory.org

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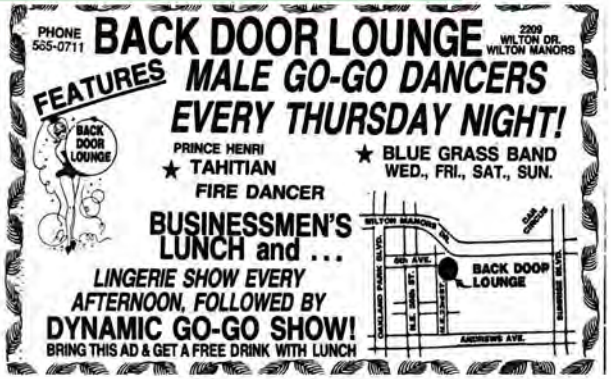
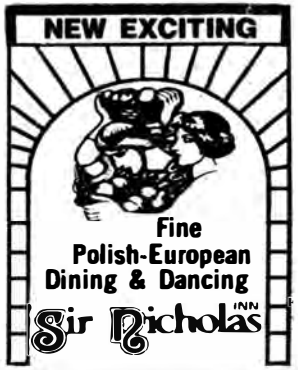
Exploring the history of 2209 Wilton Drive—*from Go-Go to Gaga, the later years*

{continuing from the last issue ...} After the *Playmate Club* closed in 1965, it was replaced that same year with the *Back Door Restaurant & Lounge*. The *Back Door* initially had a supper club theme like *Playmate Club*; but without the racy "Baby Dolls". But after a few years it came to embrace the disco era and was renamed ***Back Door-A-Go-Go Lounge***. By 1975, the *Back Door* had an identity problem. There was a daily "businessmen's lunch" that included a lingerie and go-go show. Thursdays nights were a male go-go show (with a Tahitian fire dancer?). Other nights it was a Blue Grass Band venue. The following year it settled on a "Country Music Supper Club" theme and lasted until sometime in 1978.





The ***Sir Nicholas Inn*** opened at 2209 Wilton Drive in January, 1979. It began as a Polish/Eastern-European supper club. It was heavily advertised and a popular tourist destination. Strangely, in 1986 the venue was subdivided, with the *Sir Nicholas Inn* in one section and the ***Tahiti Inn*** in the other (perhaps as a mini Mai-Kai?). As reported by the Sun-Sentinel in late December 1986, both ventures failed, *"...the Tahiti Inn closed and re-opened as* ***The Palms****. The Palms is quite different from its predecessors. It caters primarily to a homosexual clientele."*.

In October 1990 Tony Dee, a strip mall/condominium developer, purchased the entire block. He re-imaged *The Palms* into an upscale supper club dubbed ***Chardees***. It would be only the second gay restaurant in Broward and Palm Beach. According to an extensive 2005 *NewTimes* article it was *"aimed specifically at silver foxes and their admirers"*. It featured top-tier entertainers like Eartha Kitt, the Ink Spots, Pudgy, Jennifer Holliday, Judy Tenuta, and the Glenn Miller Orchestra. The *New Times* described it as *"a glittering gay mirage in a desert of boarded-up strip malls, trailer parks, crack houses, and abandoned buildings strewn with garbage"*. After a change in ownership in 2005, *Chardees* ultimately closed in 2007; after 17 years of operation.

Shorty after the closing of *Chardees* in *2007*, ***Bill's Filling Station***, a gay nightclub, quickly moved from its original location on N.E. 13th St. to take its place. The following year unknown Stefani Germanotta debuted her first single recording *"Just Dance"* at the Miami Winter Music Conference—using the stage name Lady Gaga. She began her first record release parties Memorial Day weekend 2008, with stops at *Score* in Miami and *Bill's Filling Station*. *(right is a rare photo of that actual performance)* And you know how that eventually turned out ...

Questions or comments? Contact Ron and Mary Ulm at wmhs@WiltonManorsHistoricalSociety.org

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Memorial Day 2008 unknown Stefani Germanotta, now performing as Lady Gaga, began her first record release parties at Bill's Filling Station in Wilton Manors.

2008 Lady Gaga performance photos at Bills Filling Station. Clipped from 'www.fanpop.com/clubs/lady-gaga/images/20867826/title/performance-photos-from-bills-filling-station-photo.

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And now for the details ...

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Grand Opening

MANOR FLAME

TOMORROW NIGHT

RESTAURANT & LOUNGE

528 N.E. 23rd Street, Wilton Manors, Fla.

IN THE MANOR MARKET BUILDING

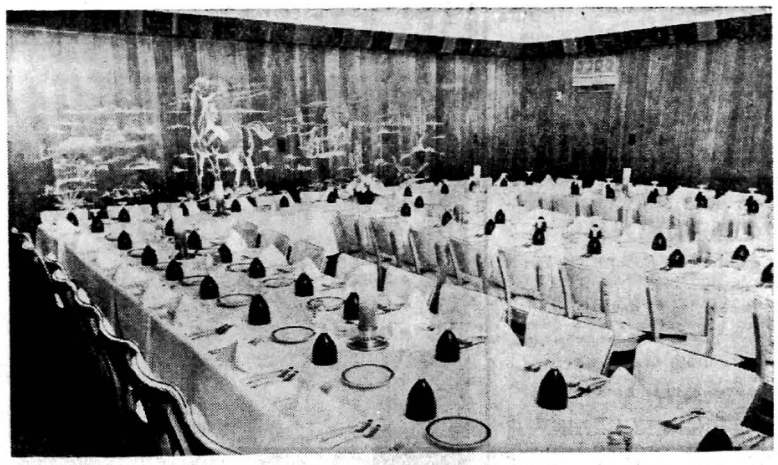
Frank Starling and LaMar Braddy cordially invite you to make plans now to attend the gala opening of the Manor Flame Restaurant & Lounge tomorrow night. You'll love the warm, informal atmosphere that will greet you, complete with the old fashioned swinging doors leading from the dining area to the lounge.

Pictured at the left is the Main Dining Room featuring Choice Western Steaks, aged for tenderness and flavor, and delicious family style Fried Chicken, cooked just the way you like it. Mr. Bill Arrington, Manager, veteran restaurateur and Bill Flanagan, Lounge Manager, are looking forward to serving you. Mrs. Helen Hankins is your hostess. Pictured below is the Palomino Banquet Room available for private parties and large enough to accommodate up to 70 people. Call for reservations.

Main Dining Room

Meet MISS FLAME OF 1958

Miss Sandee Noel, Jaycee's Miss Flame, has graciously consented to be on hand to greet you at our Grand Opening event. Miss Sandee, a true Florida beauty has several awards to her credit in the beauty field and is looking forward to meeting you.



Palomino Banquet Room

Featuring Specially Aged Western Steaks 1.75 - 1.95 - 2.50 **Family Style Fried Chicken 1.25**

MANOR

FLAME RESTAURANT & LOUNGE

528 N. E. 23rd St., Wilton Manors (In the Manor Market Bldg.) **Phone LOgan 6-1022**

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SMORGASBORD

- **LUNCHEON** $1.25
  All You Can Eat
  12 Noon to 2:30
- **DINNER** $1.95
  All You Can Eat
  5 to 9 P. M.

- Also Regular Dinners from 1.45 — Luncheons from 60c
  Dinner only on Sundays at $1.95

COCKTAIL SPECIAL
49¢
With Dinner

DANCING an ENTERTAINMENT
NIGHTLY FROM 9 P. M.
Featuring . . **"THE NOTABLES"**

We Cater To Banquets — Ph. LO 4-6011

FLAME
RESTAURANT & LOUNGE

2209 Wilton Drive
Across from Stevens Mkt.
Ft. Lauderdale
Open Daily 12 Noon to 2 A.M.

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Ft. Lauderdale News, Mar 28, 1959

Ordinance Illegal

Manor Flame 'Chools' Okay

By FRANK HOGAN
News Staff Writer

The celebrated "bar chool" case of Manor Flame Restaurant ended in Circuit Court yesterday afternoon when Judge Otis Farrington voided a Wilton Manors ordinance.

Farrington ruled the ordinance is invalid since it attempts to invade the field of liquor licenses which is reserved to the state Legislature.

Results of this action will be that the restaurant can keep its "stools, chairs or chools" at its service bar and Wilton Manors Mayor J. Frank Starling will not be prosecuted in municipal court on a charge of violating the ordinance.

Starling and his late partner, E. Lamar Braddy, who committed suicide last week by drowning himself in a rockpit near Pompano Beach, contested the ordinance after they were arrested on charges brought by the Broward County Liquor Dealers Assn.

The charges were that they had placed barstools at a service restaurant and were serving patrons there.

Starling and Braddy contended they had high-backed chairs at the bar and, therefore, were not in violation of the ordinance.

Farrington said the Legislature gave municipalities limited authority to enact ordinances in connection with liquor licenses. He said there are three fields of authority — hours of operation, distances between bars and sanitary regulations.

A fourth field may be entered by cities if they attempt to regulate public morals through police powers, Farrington observed, but such regulations must not be discriminatory against certain types of liquor licenses.

"I don't quite understand how Wilton Manors can argue it [the disputed ordinance] is a police power when it appears to be a restriction on a particular type of operation," the judge said. "I feel the ordinance is an attempt to invade a field reserved to the state and I will so hold."

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Ft Lauderdale News Apr 15, 1960

Court Orders Sale Of Lots

Six of the most valuable lots in downtown Wilton Manors will be sold at public auction at 11 a.m. April 25 unless Braddy and Starling, Inc., pays off two debts totaling $17,573.12, Circuit Judge Otis Farrington has ruled.

The property, located on the north side of Wilton Dr. between NE 22nd St. and 23rd St., is legally described as Lots 7-11, 15 and "A" of Block 47, Wilton Manors Re-Amended. Included are the former Manor Market and Manor Flame Restaurant.

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The NIGHT WATCH By Dick Hoekstra

Flame Restaurant Gets New Spark This Thursday

Next Thursday, the Flame Restaurant in Wilton Manors will reopen under new management, new food policy and new entertainment. Bill and Jean Moffett have re-established their original Playmates idea, with the addition of Chubby Mason. Chubby was with the original group. The new billing reads: "Jean and her original Playmates, with Billy Moffett and Chubby Mason." Mason blows baritone sax and clarinet as well as handling comedy bits.

BILLY MOFFET
. . .new

JEAN MOFFETT
. . . act

Oscar Garrigues is the new owner of the Flame restaurant and lounge. Oscar is said to also own the Manor and Sheldon Hotels in Wildwood, N.J. The place has been redecorated and a new entrance, from Wilton Drive, has been added. It's a long sort of arcade.

Organist Ben Hall is the alternate entertainer. Wonder if they ever cleared up that bar situation when Braddy had it. Remember there was some hassle whether the customers could sit at the bar or not. I think someone wound up calling the bar stools "Ghools" to get around the service bar ordinance.

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Ft. Lauderdale News, Jan 10, 1961

New 'Playmate' Key Club

Tom Yoder and **Clayton Leavin** are preparing the final touches on their new "Playmate Key Club" at the site of the old Flame restaurant on Wilton Manors Drive. The boys have held pretty much to the initial key club format. They will use "Baby Dolls" as their hostesses. "Musical comedy and variety acts" is the way they describe their entertainment policy.

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Miami Herald, Feb 25, 1962

TOM YODER reports that he and Clayton Leaver have abandoned plans for making the "Playmate" a key club.

New venture debuts around the first of March as a public restaurant-lounge in quarters formerly occupied by the Flame Restaurant in Wilton Manors.

Spot is scheduled to open with Serge Valdes, pianist, and the "Tempos" quartet which will play for dancing.

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Ft. Lauderdale News May 01,1962

The Playmate Club in Wilton Manors probably will open, sort of quietly, this Saturday night. The spot has gone public after attempting an earlier key club operation. **Chuck Damanti's** Tempos, with **Lou Gomez** on bass and **Bobby Le Fevre** on organ, will be the musical attraction with **Ginny Kay** the vocalist. **Serge Valdez** will alternate at the piano.

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OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Playmate CLUB

"FORT LAUDERDALE'S MOST POPULAR DANCING SPOT"

WELCOME PARTY SATURDAY NIGHT

THE GENE HOOVER TRIO

DANCING NIGHTLY
CLOSED SUNDAY

Featuring ART WILLIAMS
BOB BRADLEY ON PIANO

- **DAILY BUFFET** LUNCHEON 99c / DINNER $1.45
- **COCKTAIL HOUR** 4 TO 6 DAILY GET YOUR FREE DRINK

PRIVATE DINING ROOM
For Club Meetings and Parties

EVENINGS
- ALL POPULAR DRINKS 90c
- No Cover, No Beverage Min.

2209 Wilton Drive—LO 6-9252

Playmate Club

Good Evening

APPETIZERS A LA CART	.85
SHRIMP COCKTAIL	.40
MARRINATED HERRING	.35
MINESTRONE SOUP	.15
TOMATO JUICE	

Entrees

JUMBO BAKED STUFFED SHRIMP (Delicious)	2.95
LOBSTER TAILS	2.95
FRIED SHRIMP	1.95
DELMONICO STEAK	3.25
CHOICE SIRLOIN STRIP	3.45
½ BROILED or FRIED CHICKEN	1.95
CENTER CUT PORK CHOPS	2.25

Italian Specialties

CHICKEN CACCIATORE	2.45
VEAL PARMIZIANA	2.25
ITALIAN SAUSAGES	1.95
LIAGUINI VONGOLI (Clam Sauce Red or White)	1.65
BAKED LASAGNE	1.50
SPAGHETTI & MEAT BALLS	1.25

Price includes side order of spaghetti or French fries, salad with choice of dressing, garlic bread, dessert and coffee.

DANCING NIGHTLY

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Key Club Plan Never Mourned

Playmate Happy Over Switch

By PATRICIA BROWN
Herald Columnist

On The NIGHTBEAT
With Pat Brown

TOM YODER and Clayton Leaver thus far have not regretted abandoning their original key club project in favor of a public wine-and-dine establishment.

Restaurant-lounge called the "Playmate" opened a little over a week ago to a packed house and has enjoyed a thriving business ever since.

Wilton Manors spot, which draws heavily on neighborhood traffic, occupies the premises formerly known as the Flame Restaurant.

Building has a new red and white facade. Inside has been redecorated and refurbished and there's a new parquet dance floor in front of the bandstand which has been relocated.

Dining room specializes in a single budget item — a 16-ounce New York strip steak dinner with the trimmings. Buffet lunch is also available except on Saturday and Sunday but there's a sandwich menu at all hours.

In the entertainment division, Playmate has installed a quartet called the "Tempos." Group features Chuck Damanti on drums and Lou Gomez, bass — plus a couple of dollies named Bobbie LeFeber and Ginny Kay. Bobbie plays organ and Ginny dishes up vocals.

Tempos deliver a wide range of dance beats from waltz to twist and seem to have no trouble getting the customers out on the floor.

Quartet is spelled by Pianist Serge Valdes who works the lounge. Serge is up from the Castaways where he held the stand for three and a half years.

Incidentally, Playmate's bar manager is named "Reggie." But don't expect to be greeted by a gent. Reggie's a girl — and a lovely one, too.

★ ★ ★

The Tempos Quartet
. . . Playmate's dance music

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Ft. Lauderdale News, Mar 30, 1962

PLAYMATE PLAYERS — Providing the music at the Playmate Club in Wilton Manors are the popular Tempos. From left are vocalist Ginny Kay; Lou Gomez, who plays bass, guitar and banjo; drummer Chuck Damanti, and Bobbie LeFeber, who doubles on piano and organ.

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Ft Lauderdale News Apr 06, 1962

The Playmate club

"Where the Beautiful BABY DOLLS Are"

● DAILY BUFFET LUNCHEON All You Can Eat $1.25

TODAY'S SPECIAL
Steamed **SHRIMP** or Broiled **LOBSTER**
All You Can Eat $1.95

Dancing Nitely (Except Tues.) to the Rhythm of **THE TEMPOS**

Our Famous Steak U.S. TOP CHOICE SIRLOIN Baked Potato, Garlic Bread, Salad, Coffee $2.95

Private Dining Room Available for Banquets and Private Parties

Phone LO 6-9252

2209 Wilton Dr.,
Wilton Manors

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Ft Lauderdale News May 05, 1962

26—HELP WANTED, FEMALE

WAITRESSES

Attractive cocktail waitresses interested in year round work with high earnings. Apply 2-4 p.m. Daily or call for interview.

PLAYMATE CLUB
2209 Wilton Dr. LO 6-9252.

(3-13

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Ft Laudedale News Dec 05, 1962

EXPERIENCED Cocktail Waitresses wanted. Must be attractive, age 23-32. Ambitious workers. Wear shorts to interview. Apply Playmate Club, 2209 Wilton Dr. 2-4, 8-10 p.m.

(12-4

Society Digital Collection-permission/att

Doing The Town With Bob Freund

Playmate Club Switches Operation, Caters To All Now

The Playmate Club in Wilton Manors is turning into one of the nicest ways to spend an evening. The club, under the direction of Clayton Leaver, his wife Lou, and Tom Yoder, started out as a private key club, but quickly switched its operation and now caters to the general public.

The original idea is still in many minds, but the public is gradually realizing the Playmate's excellence as a dining and dancing spot. A long hall-like entrance way gives the missus a chance to arrange her bouffant and her escort a minute to fix his tie. You're not blown into the main room immediately.

FREUND

The bar is handsome, the dance-floor spacious, and while a large room, the Playmate Club manages an intimate feeling with low-lighting and clever seating arrangements. The Tempos, currently holding down the bandstand, are a quartet of talented musicians. Bobbie Le Feber swings a mean Hammond, Lou Gomez plucks the bass, and Chuck DaManti is one of the best drummers around, formaly with Andy Bartha's bunch.

Ginny Kay is the femcee and sings for your supper. Ginny wanders from the bandstand occasionally to curl the gentlemen's hair with "I Wanna Be Loved By You" a la Helen Kane. The dance portions are well-backed by this group, and they present a goodly supply of show-tunes, outstanding in their workover of "Lover."

The Baby Dolls, who provide service and good viewing, engage in an impromptu twist number, led by Marie Martitn, whose costume, ringed in fringe, gives the dance extra dimensions. The gal also shakes a cocktail while she twists, and serves it at ringside. Marie is joined in her twirling by Mary Kay Bennett, Maureen Sebastian, Barbara Berger and Fay Swain.

MARIE MARTINI . . . twister

GEORGE SISTRUNK . . . directs

BILL GRAHAM . . . loss

HUGH MARTIN . . . Pit

WOODY WOODBURY . . . Today

DAVE GARROWAY . . . missed

The Playmate Club offers dining facilities for private parties, for civic clubs and organizations. The list of such patrons is growing. There's a buffet hour every day, 11:30 to 2:30, with dinner served from 6 to 11. Lou Leaver has so many ideas for the place, that next time we visit this news will be old. The Tempos play through next Friday night, being replaced Saturday by the Jade Trio, with Don Hayes, Bob Wetzel and Hank Peletiere.

Another Round Table In Motion

Had a nice cha and dinner with George Bacher at his Round Table the other night. George is looking fit and bronze after a Nassau hiatus. Bacher is widening his circles—that is—he's building another Round Table. The local one has been such a success, says George, he's starting work on a duplicate version in Orlando. Actual construction will start in about a month.

Commenting on the Round Table's garlic dressing, unlike any we've sampled, led George to divulge he's having the mixture bottled for sale in super markets. So many people who've dined at his King Arthur-inspired restaurant have written or phoned for the recipe. George has decided to make it available, with the ingredients still a secret.

Dan Baitcher (same pronunciation as the boss), who has been managing the Round Table here, moves to managership of the new Orlando place. Fred Neumann continues in Ft. Lauderdale as one of the most attentive and impeccable of Maitre D's.

George is offering a plan this week that beats all others in how far people will go to get free movie tickets. In honor of "Knights of the Round Table," at the Gateway, George will give passes to anyone arriving at his restaurant in armor atop a real horse. Line forms at the drawbridge.

Symphony Chorus Sings "The Creation"

Music-lovers accustomed to hearing "The Messiah," and only that, in the oratorio field, will be happy to know the Ft. Lauderdale Symphony Chorus will present Haydn's "The Creation" at the First Methodist Church in Ft. Lauderdale this Tuesday at 8 p.m.

The group will be augmented by eight soloists for this presentation. George Sistrunk directs, and organist is Robert H. Nelson. Soloists include Sigrid Grantham, Vanorma Tozzie, Jack Hutcheson, Charles Lewis, Herbert Hinton, and Allen Potter. The church is at 505 SE Sixth St.

Bill Graham reports a sad state of affairs. Several books, containing his songs and material, were stolen from his car while it was parked in front of the Red Carpet last Wednesday A.M. Whether an act of vandalism or a prank, it's a great loss to Bill. If the thief realizes what he stole is of no possible use to him, please contact JAckson 2-2033 or this columnist.

Being slightly new to this beat, and assuming when persons call in information, they are speaking the truth, we may be subject to a few in the business who'll put anything over on a newcomer. A person named Larry Maturi called this office with information about himself and his upcoming summer activities. This man said he had been at Cafe Society. The management informed us riday this was not true. What possible gain can a informed us Friday this was not true. What possible gain can a person, in this case a bartender, realize with information so easily proven false? No more calls please, Mr. Maturi.

Orange Mayors At Pal's

Hugh Martin opened this past week at the Charcoal Pit. Hugh's a popular musician around town, and joins forces at the Pit with Vincent Lawrence. Comparing oranges at Pal's recently were the mayors of East Orange and West Orange, N. J. Mayors Kelly and Sheeran found quite a few specimens in Pal's abundant fruit bowl. Pupils of Bettye Barr give an accordion recital this coming Friday at the Masonic Temple in Holiday Park.

Woody Woodbury does a shot on NBC's Today show Monday, May 28. Woody should jazz up a show that has recently become a dirge. Dave Garroway is a sadly missed factor. Blanche Wallace, the local "red-hot mama," booked into the Bonanza Room Wednesdays through Saturdays. Blanche's buxom talents should fit right in to the Gay 90's room.

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Miami Herald Aug 16, 1962

New Notes on Playmate Agenda

WELL, ANYHOW — Playmate Club changed hands over the weekend and some new notes are on the agenda.

Club inaugurates a dinner menu highlighting chicken and Italian dishes, with Kosher sandwiches for the noontime trade.

In the entertainment division, spot will follow a jazz policy with dancing, opening formally Friday night with the Russ Kelsey quartet featuring "Flip" Phillips. Sunday evening jazz concerts are also planned.

Flip, of course, is well known in Broward: It's a first appearance for Russ although the pianist worked the Dade circuit for three seasons which included a stint with Don Rickles at the Riot Room.

Playmate's new owners are "Sam" Benore, from Detroit, and John Shuttleworth, formerly identified with the Golden Falcon, Danny's and Coral Ridge Yacht Club.

Incidentally, hear there's another merger in the offing. Sam and Russ are reported to be planning a September wedding.

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Ft Lauderdale News Feb 28, 1963

DOING THE TOWN *With Bob Freund*

Playmate Club In Wilton Manors Dealt Low Blow

The following is the sort of thing we regret to report in this business, but it's imperative when innocent people are involved. The Playmate Club in Wilton Manors has had its ups and downs, but last week it hit a new low.

When **Clayton Leaver** and **Tom Yoder** had the spot, it built a steady following among those who like to dance in an attractive restaurant-lounge. Evidently, Leaver, who had other interests, wanted to shed the responsibility, and leased it to another party.

FREUND

This has proven to be an unfortunate decision for Leaver and for the employes of the Playmate. The leading Playmate absconded with all receipts from a big party last week.

Several people, including "bartician" **Pat Riedel**, put their faith in the new manager, who leased the spot. Pat went to work there to get the place swinging, as she puts it. She isn't out any money, because she wanted to re-establish the bar and get it going before money was discussed.

However, the manager left not only with the receipts, but owing the help. He also took along several of Miss Riedel's personal recordings, and the chef reports he's out about $600.

Latest reports have the Leaver-Yoder interests with the Playmate on their hands again, but the place is now shuttered. And it's too bad, for the Playmate answered a definite need in its Wilton Manors location.

PAT RIEDEL
. . . victim

BILLY MAXTED
. . . unbeatable

MARV WELCH
. . . tops

Pat Riedel would like it known that she's not a fly-by-night. The gal has a pretty solid reputation in town, and doesn't want the Playmate fiasco to hurt it. The femme mixologist has moved to Tony' Lounge and Restaurant on N Andrews Ave., and feels the move is a good one — Tony's has been there quite a spell.

Islander Lounge Drawing Attention

Hearing nice reports about the attractive Islander Bar out on Oakland Park Blvd. Lots of satisfied customers have been phoning telling us to get out there. We Will, we will!

Sympathies are extended to two nightbeat personalities this week. **Geza Werner** flew to Vienna the other day to attend funeral services for his mother, who passed away as he was in Austria. **Oceania's** manager-bartender **Bill Tomlinson** also lost his mother.

What with the flu and all last week, plus the heavy helping of music and theater this week, your columnist may be accused of deserting the nightclub scene. Tain't true, but a symphony or an opera takes up quite a chunk of the evening.

We'll start swinging back along the rock-and-rye route again tonight, with three openings on the book: **Andy Bartha** at the Kasbah, **Al Fike** at Danny's Supper Club, and **Lee Caron** at the Tropicana of the Lauderdale Beach Hotel.

Meanwhile, there's lots of entertainment which has already qualified for out "tops in town" category. There's **Nino Nanni** at the Caribbean Room of the Lauderdale Beach, **Chet McIntyre** and **Norm Dygon** at the Coral Ridge, and **The Personalities** at the Galt Ocean Mile, **Marv Welch** and **Sunday Smith** at Ruttgers.

(Galt Ocean Mile, incidentally, is swimming with other personalities this week. Both **Dorothy Lamour** and **Liberace** are guests there).

Fine Triple-Play At Trade Winds

The Tunesmen continuing at a hot pace at the Tapis Rouge, and **The Voyagers** furthering an already long-run at the Bahia-Cabana. Ditto **The Punchinellos** at the Jolly Roger. **Jack Teagarden's** super jazz at the Beach Club and **Kenny Miller's** devastating ditties at Manor House are making our town hum.

And there's lots more. The town is really jumping this week. The triple-play package at the Trade Winds — Billy Maxted, Pierre Page and Harry Boyman — offers an unbeatable way to spend an evening.

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Miami Herald Feb 09, 1967

BOB McGARVEY

ANNOUNCES
THE OPENING OF THE

BACK DOOR

RESTAURANT and LOUNGE

Featuring the Fabulous

FRANKIE NAN TRIO

PLUS SINGER

MARIO DEROMA

Formerly With:
Sammy Davis, Jr.
Nat King Cole
Dorothy Collins

BACK DOOR

2209 Wilton Dr.
Wilton Manors

For Reservations Call 565-0711

NO COVER NO MIN.

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Ft Lauderdale News May 02, 1965

BAR Maids Attractive pleasant, 4 days a week. Back Door Go Go. 2209 Wilton Dr.

WAITRESS, hours 2 p.m. to 10 p.m. 6 days. 2209 Wilton Dr. Gold Grill

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Ft Lauderdale News Jul 23, 1975

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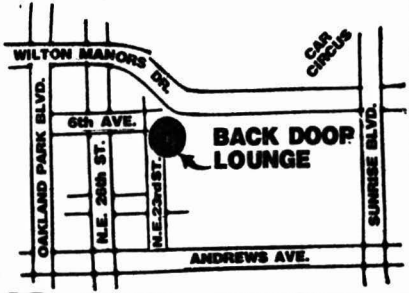

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RICKY KING & JAY STACEY

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AT 9:00 PM

COMPLETE DINNER

FROM $3.50

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Ft Lauderdale News Jan 12, 1979

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WILTON MANORS

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7-12 P.M. Dinner & Dance,
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S Florida Sun-Sentinel, Oct 24, 1986

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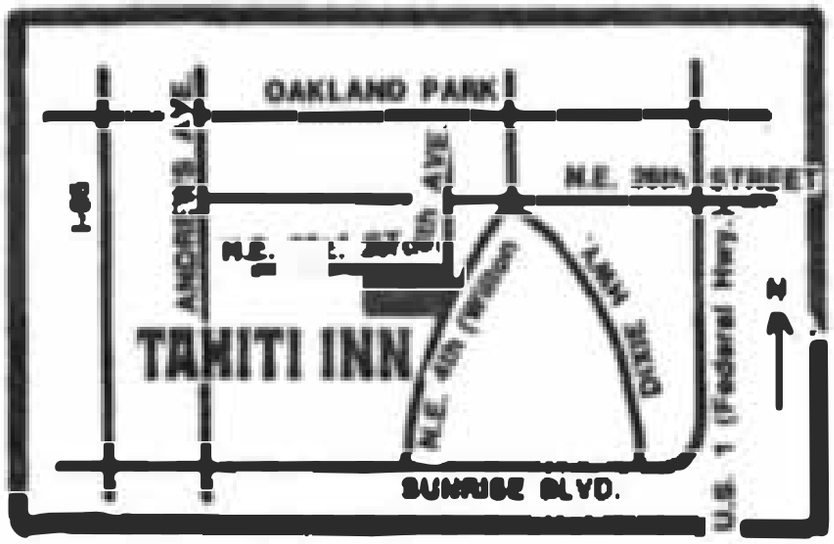

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Miami Herald Nov 21, 1986

POLISH

SIR NICHOLAS INN, now part of Tahiti Inn. Fine Polish-European cuisine. Dining 5-10pm, live music. Sun. Buffet, Pierogi feast. Closed Mon. 2209 Wilton Dr. Ft. Laud. Res. 564-4901 **(10)**

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South Florida Sun-Sentinel, Dec 26, 1986

known as Sir Nicholas' Inn. As with almost everywhere else in South Florida, the site of Sir Nicholas has changed names and format many times.

The latest transition occurred just a few weeks ago, when the Tahiti Inn closed and reopened as The Palms. The Palms is quite different from its predecessors.

The new restaurant/cabaret caters to a largely homosexual clientele. They have live entertainment, from 9 p.m. to 1 a.m., Tuesday through Sunday. Keyboardist **Mary Jane** plays Tuesday evenings, followed by **Red Hot's** performances Wednesday through Sunday.

●

While the Tahiti Inn may not have been successful with its leaning toward the Polynesian, the Mai-Kai in Fort Lauderdale just celebrated its 30th anniversary as a restaurant and its 25th year as an island-oriented showclub.

The 1987 **Islander's Revue** is one of the best I've seen throughout the years. Completely restaged, the new show begins with the beat of native drums, musically moving from Tahiti to Hawaii, New Zea-

Please see BRAZIER, 44

Out and about

The Tahiti Inn did not last long in Wilton Manors. You might remember the location from when it was

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Miami Herald Oct 29, 1993

VARIETY/REVUES

Chardees: Pudgy, Sunday; two drink minimum per person; no cover; dinner and show 7 p.m. and 9:45 p.m.; $39; show only: 8 p.m. and 9:45 p.m. $15 per person; 15% gratuity applies; 2209 Wilton Drive, FT. LAUDERDALE; 563-1800.

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South Florida Sun-Sentinel, Apr 06, 2004

Tuesday's Angels dinner, 6 p.m. at Chardee's Restaurant, 2209 Wilton Drive, Wilton Manors. $18. Call 954-292-8670.

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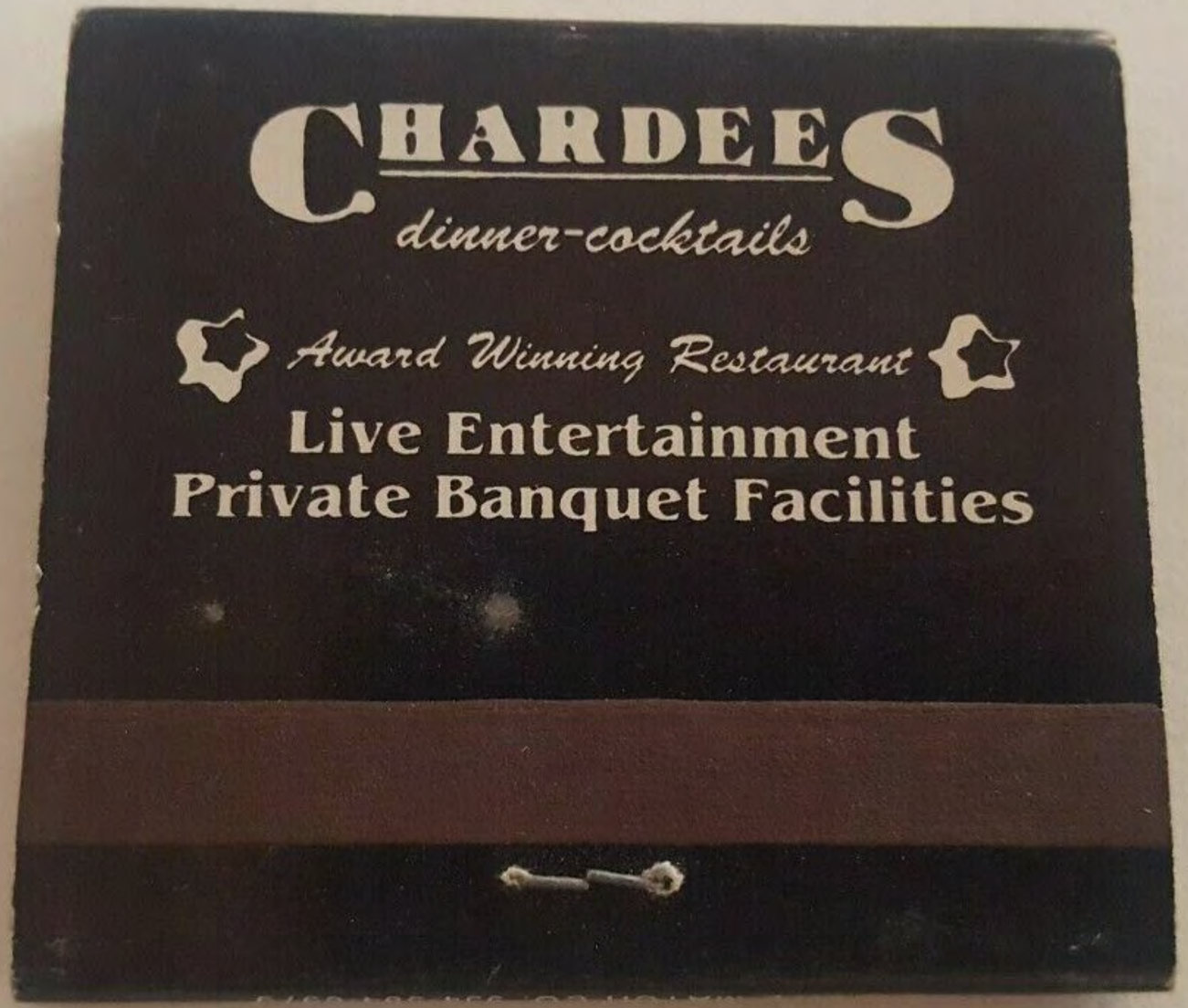

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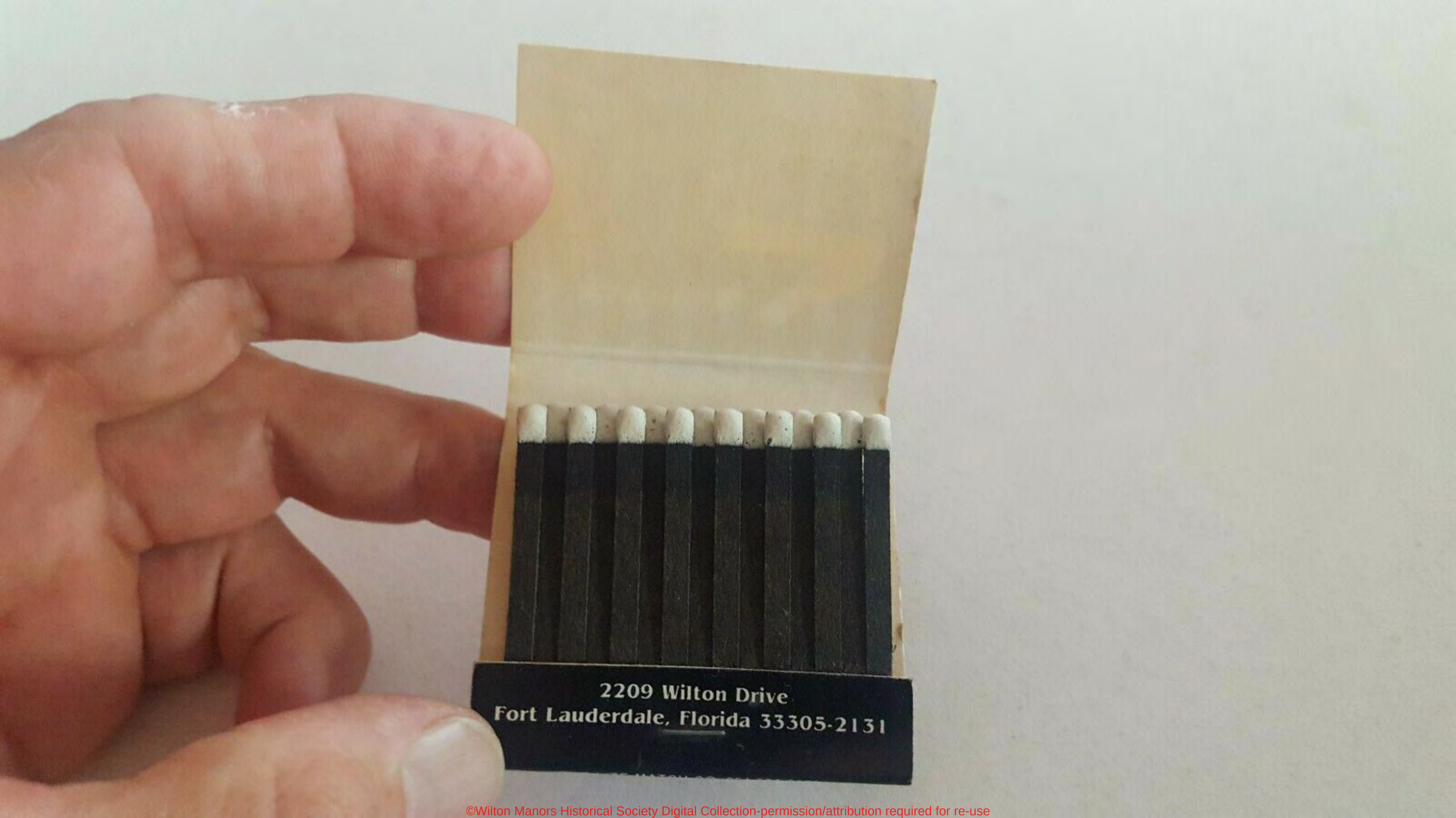

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| RESTAURANT REVIEWS |

Chardees Cheek to Cheek

GAIL SHEPHERD | AUGUST 4, 2005 | 4:00AM

"You know what would be perfect?" my significant other mused recently. "One of those places where you get all dressed up and go eat lobster tails and prime rib. And there's a big band playing so you can dance after dinner."

"Supper clubs," I said. "Copacabana Venetian Room. Kit Kat Lounge."

We'd just gotten back from California, and a full day of unpacking our loot had left us too exhausted to cook. In San Francisco, we'd dined on thumbnail-sized Japanese oysters at a place where kitschy kung fu thrillers were projected on a 30-foot wall. We'd eaten sautéed pumpkin with ground beef at an Afghani café owned by Hamid Karzai's brother. We'd minced our way through a 12-course symposium of ever-so-precious nibbles at the French Laundry, one of the world's greatest restaurants. But it's never enough. Like all addicts, we were still chasing the dragon.

I've been hearing that supper clubs are the next big thing; they're springing up wherever the glamorati are waxing nostalgic over cigars and effusive cocktails, but I couldn't think of one I wanted to subject myself to. The fabulous supper-club phenomenon has evidently not yet groped its way down to the netherquarters of South Florida. All we have are those ghastly dinner-theater things. And Martha's on the Intracoastal. But the idea of watching blue-hairs tilt to "Moonlight in Vermont" was enough to put me off my oysters Rockefeller.

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Then I thought of Chardees in Wilton Manors. A supper club with a twist. True, 80 percent of the clientele at Chardees is collecting Social Security. And their fashion passion leans toward sansabelt shorts and black knee socks. But there's something about watching a flock of gay-and-grays foxtrot on a tiny stage -- while a silly light show turns everything progressively green, pink, and purple and a pudgy, winded organist belts out covers of Neil Sedaka tunes -- that fills my wizened heart with gladness.

So we left off sorting through Golden Gate figurines and Chinatown parasols. By the time we'd tossed our keys to the valet and swooped into the foyer at Chardees, I was ready to begin the beguine.

advertisement

Chardees opened in 1990, and it's still glamorous, if tattered. The brass gleams, the mirrors reflect the multicolored lights, the bar's as grand and spacious as ever. If the potted plants are a little dusty and the carpets threadbare, these defects will soon be remedied: When Norman Artzt bought Chardees in May, he came to the table with plans for a complete makeover -- "new bar, new floors, new ceiling," he says. He's got 8,000 square feet to work with -- two levels in the dining room, a stage, and a bar room that seems to go on forever. Plus the Courtyard Café next door. He's hoping to have the place renovated by September, without ever having to close his doors. For a guy going into the restaurant biz for the first time, he's bitten off quite a chunk.

Still, the "before" picture ain't bad. The gay seniors who make up the bulk of the clientele may be losing some hair and gaining some paunch, but they haven't lost their taste for Cole Porter tunes and dry martinis. Or, apparently, their sex appeal -- there are plenty of May-December romances blossoming over these linen-draped tables. Lesbians, straight couples, and younger gay men seem to find their way here too. Some of these folks have probably been eating at Chardees for 15 years, when it was the only gay restaurant in town. At least, that's what its original owner, Tony Dee, tells me.

"There was one restaurant for us gay people, and it was in Davie," Dee remembers. "That was called January's. I was in commercial strip centers, plus building condos at the time. But I thought if I opened up a gay restaurant, I could catch people coming down from Delray and Deerfield."

advertisement

Dee spun his silken web and, as he'd hoped, snared lots of handsome flies. He decorated his supper club with mirrors, banquettes of greenery, and strips of neon. He put in a gigantic bar and a stage where, as maitre d' and redoubtable M.C., he would introduce entertainers like Eartha Kitt, the Ink Spots, underground comedienne Pudgy, singer Jennifer Holliday, Goddess of the Galaxy Judy Tenuta, and his greatest coup, the Glenn Miller Orchestra (still touring 60 years after the death of its World War II-era namesake). With his chef, Charlie, he pulled together a classic menu of shrimp cocktail, escargots, prime rib *au jus*, and caesar salad. He called the place Chardees -- Char for Charlie, Dee from his own last name.

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| RESTAURANT REVIEWS |

Chardees Cheek to Cheek

GAIL SHEPHERD | AUGUST 4, 2005 | 4:00AM

Chardees was a glittering gay mirage in a desert of boarded-up strip malls, crack houses, and abandoned buildings strewn with garbage. But the show went on: grand parties, benefits, queer weddings. "I got married here in September of '92," Dee says. "White tux, a huge cake for 225 people, the works. It was very stylish."

Thinking he was going to retire, Dee sold Chardees in 1995 to Don Hazlett. But retire he hasn't -- Dee, now 70, recently sank $2.5 million into the Schubert Resort to refurbish the swank gay guesthouse in Victoria Park. He's still landlord of Chardees, and he thinks of it as his "baby."

"I took the place from nothing way up to the top. We had everybody coming here. The night Glenn Miller's band played, I called up my aunt in New York; it was her 80th birthday, and she listened to the whole two-hour show over the phone."

In April of '97, George Kessinger opened a rambunctious gay bar and café called Georgie's Alibi across the street from Chardees in a decrepit strip mall. And that did it. A slew of gay or gay-friendly businesses moved in too -- coffeehouses, real estate agents, clothing stores. That same year, Jim Stork plunked down Stork's Bakery and Café on NE 15th Avenue; three years later, Wilton Manors elected its first gay mayor, John Fiore. Norm Kent founded the tribe's local paper, *Express Gay News,* in December of '99. Today, Wilton Manors has become the center of Florida's queer universe. The few hundred feet between Georgie's Alibi and Chardees on Wilton Drive is the nexus of one of the gayest towns in America; if you believe the census reports, 40 percent of its 13,000-plus residents identify as gay, lesbian, or bisexual. And the restaurants keep springing up to feed them: Galanga, Dorothy's Deli, Acapulco Lindo, Hamburger Mary's, Costello's, Tropics.

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In the intervening years, Chardees lost some of its gloss -- by the time Artzt bought it in May, the place was seating only 30 or 40 diners a night. But the Saturday night we visited, things were back in full swing -- every table and half the bar were brimming with happy people.

Chardees is loads of fun. The staff is just ridiculously nice. At least three servers stopped by our table on various occasions, beaming with smiles, to see how we were doing. You feel welcomed, taken care of, beloved by strangers, instantly relaxed.

It's classic supper-club fare all the way. Entrées like grilled lamb chops ($20.95) or veal chops ($24.95) come with either soup (a savory if oversalted beef barley the night we visited) or a simple salad of iceberg lettuce, tomato, onion, and grated carrot. Chardees is the kind of place where waiters still hustle out plates bearing plastic covers to trap the heat.

You know what your food is going to taste like before you take a bite: This is the comfort food from dinner tables of the '50s and '60s, before nouvelle and global cuisines turned our gastronomic world upside down.

The lineup of appetizers has hardly changed in 15 years -- baked French onion soup ($5.50), crab cakes ($7.95), and escargots ($6.95); unprepossessing sides like baked potato, onion rings, and a vegetable *du jour* ($4.25). Still, this is decent, hearty food at fairly gentle prices -- and those prices get even gentler on Monday and Wednesday nights, when two-for-one entrées attract singles and budget-conscious couples who'd rather be tripping the light fantastic than slaving over a hot stove. A full meal for two on Saturday evening cost us a measly $56 before tax and tip.

Our martinis ($8) were cold; a basket of bread with butter pats wrapped in foil was hot and crusty. We started with stuffed mushroom caps ($6.95), juicy with butter and white wine and stuffed with breadcrumbs and minced seafood, then broiled for a minute to give them a crust. These weren't bad; they just lacked imaginative zing -- they could have used a pinch of fresh herbs.

From a list of specials that included Caribbean-style lobster tails and several fresh fish entrées, including tilapia stuffed with crab meat ($20.95), I ordered coconut-crusted snapper ($18.95) served in a buttery citrus sauce and garnished with a fragrant sprig of rosemary. It came to the table piping hot, flaky, and deliciously edible. But those coconut flakes didn't do anything for the fish -- there was no synergy. And a bland side of unseasoned, unbuttered, steamed broccoli and cauliflower added nothing to the flavor profile.

By most accounts, Lawrence Frank opened the original supper club, Lawrey's, in Beverly Hills in 1938. Frank served glistening prime rib carved tableside from a cart, mashed potatoes and Yorkshire pudding, creamed corn and sweet peas, all of it seasoned with a special salt you can still buy at any grocery store. His clientele of celebs and big shots took home their leftovers in another Frank invention, the doggy bag. To honor the man who started it all, we ordered

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| RESTAURANT REVIEWS |

Chardees Cheek to Cheek

GAIL SHEPHERD | AUGUST 4, 2005 | 4:00AM

All fairly niggling complaints when you consider that Chardees is serving satisfying and generous meals at reasonable prices to people who may be on fixed incomes, with a little bit of jitterbug or box-step on the side. We finished with a slice of caramel pecan pie ($4.25), straight out of the box but sweet and comforting nonetheless.

The couples swooning and twirling on the dance floor -- longtime companions, geezers, and boytoys, graying but ever-romantic butches and femmes -- were sweet and comforting too. Artzt has taken over a gem that just needs a little polishing up -- to restore its former luster and give it the gleam it yearns for. In a couple of short months, he seems to be moving things right along. Let's face it -- the place is an institution. How many gay supper clubs are there in South Florida? How many places where you can have your beef and hoof it too?

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Later reminiscences about the history of Chardees

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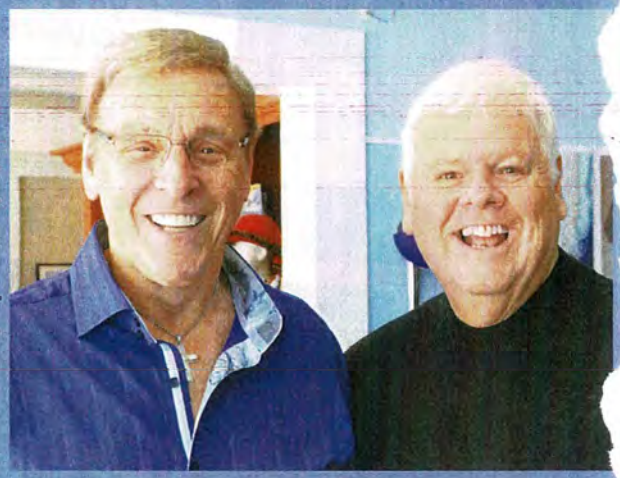
HOT SPOTS JANUARY 19, 2012

They're back!

Tony Dee and Charlie Mielke bring their magic touch back to The Drive

By: Sheri Elfman



The dynamic duo, Tony Dee and Charlie Mielke, will return to The Drive after a long absence. The business partners and longtime friends have been credited with putting Wilton Manors on the map when they opened up Chardees in 1990.

For those of you who aren't familiar with Chardees, it was the first gay business to open on what was then, a desolate Wilton Drive. The restaurant/bar/club was the place to see and be seen.

"When we arrived on the Drive, the only thing we could find was tumbleweed and for rent signs on every building," said Charlie. "Chardees quickly became a landmark, it was an anchor for Wilton Manors and the Drive."

Chardees was not the first business that Dee and Charlie had together. The two met at a club on Long Island 40 years ago and became great friends. They started a successful catering business in Huntington, New York and soon became interested in South Florida. Dee has been in the business of commercial real estate in New York and Florida for many decades, two areas that the business partners traveled between for many years.

In 1983, Dee and Charlie built 60 condos in Coral Springs called Waters Edge.

"It was completed and sold in less than a year," said Dee.

They took a break and began flipping houses until 1990, when they opened Chardees.

The popular establishment was the very start of Wilton Drive becoming the amazing gayborhood it is today. The name Chardees was a combination of "Charlie" and "Dee" – Tony's last name. It became known worldwide as the place to be.

"It became internationally famous quickly," said Dee.

"People vacationing in Paris, London, Rome would sit in local gay establishments and when they would mention they were from Fort Lauderdale, people would ask about Chardees," Charlie added.

The reason for its popularity? That could be chalked up to the winning formula of over-the-top entertainers, unique special events and the long-standing business partnership of the two owners.

Performers like Eartha Kitt, Jennifer Holliday, The

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Glenn Miller Orchestra and Jimmy James have all graced the stage at Chardees. Special annual events like Christmas in July always drew crowds to the fun place.

"We had 15 Christmastrees... it was truly a fairy land," joked Charlie.

Years later, Georgie's Alibi opened up across the street.

"It was like passing a torch," said Charlie. "George is a good friend of mine."

Eartha Kitt on stage with both Tony Dee and Charlie Mielke circa 1990.

Charlie Mielke left Chardees late 1991 to move back North with his partner. Dee became the sole proprietor and continued the business the partners built together.

The fun events continued at the establishment. In 1992, Chardees hosted a fabulous over-the-top wedding for Dee and his late partner Roy Rinicker.

"The house was packed," said Dee. "It was like a straight wedding with two guys in tuxes and tails."

In 1995, Dee sold Chardees to the late Don Hazlett who kept it going for another 10 years, until it was sold again and closed soon after.

"Later, the dynamic Jackson Padgett and Mark Negrete opened Bill's Filling Station and became my tenant in what used to be known as Chardees," Dee explained. "Their Alibi is directly across the street."

In 2003, Dee purchased the Schubert Resort in Victoria Park, which he sold six months ago.

"My years at The Schubert were wonderful," said Dee. "I met dynamic people from all over the world."

Tinseltown took notice of the attractive property – Will Smith filmed portions of the movie "Ali" at the resort and the sequel to "Another Gay Movie-- "Gays Gone Wild" was also filmed there.

"Dee did a two minute cameo, that ended up on the floor of the editing room," Charlie joked.

During his years at the Schubert, Dee asked Charlie to return to Florida to assist in helping the Schubert take off. Once again the "Dynamic Duo" worked their magic!

"It is the most beautiful property imaginable," Charlie said. "The rooms are beyond compare to this day."

When Dee sold the property, he travelled extensively. Soon, however, he became bored and luckily, an exciting real estate proposition came his way...Tropics Restaurant and Bars on Wilton Drive!

Charlie and Dee's nephew Steven informed Dee that Tropics was available and he was very interested.

Dee purchased the property that Tropics Restaurant is located on and Charlie and Steven purchased the restaurant. They take possession of the property on January 23.

"I am continuously being told that Dee and I are the 'Dynamic Duo' of Wilton Drive and here we go again, said Charlie.

Dee is the largest single holder of real estate property in Wilton Manors and said that he finds it amusing that it only took him twenty years to get from one side of the street to the other.

Charlie and Steven are extremely excited about Tropics Restaurant and Bars. Tune in next week for a feature on their plans for the well-known restaurant and bar.

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Features

Chardees Lounge's Wilton Manors Grand Opening

By Scott Holland - December 13, 2017 4636 0

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Late night discussions at home can cover a variety of issues. When your partner asks you "What do you think about opening a bar?" you tend to raise an eyebrow.

Tony Dee and Andy Martin celebrate five years together this December 31 and it's been a great partnership all around. "We complement each other on so many levels" Andy stated. "We can either finish each other's sentences or give the other a look and know how to handle a situation. We are very connected."

Tony had a vision for a Supper Club back in 1990 and it happened on Wilton Drive on October 1, 1990 where Southern Nights now resides.

"I had no idea how long or if it would work, if anyone remembers what Wilton Drive looked like in the early 90's? Tony says, "It was a huge success in less than 90 days when I booked Eartha Kitt for Christmas."

Andy's background includes 20 years in the hotel business, five in retail, and one year as a shop owner.

"When Tony asked about opening a bar, I felt like it would be a natural progression," said Andy. I'm not one for the spotlight, but I want the entertainers and bartenders to shine. That's who the customers are there to see."

Growing up in North Carolina, Andy never stepped foot in Fort Lauderdale until the summer of 2010.

"The only thing people used to tell me was 'if you are ever in Fort Lauderdale, go to Chardees," said Andy.

He never experienced the original, but that gave him a template for the new Chardees. Instead of a massive hall that included bars and a Dinner Club, the new venue would be more intimate and diverse.

"Walking into Progress Bar the first time, I loved the space. The inside is a modern and classic mix. The Patio Bar is a separate venue that you can have a relaxing time and enjoy the outdoors," said Andy. "I want people to enjoy music, but I also want people to be able to talk. I think in this era of cell phone obsession, people want to go out with friends or meet people and be able to talk, not scream over loud music. The art of conversation needs to be rediscovered."

"Here, 27 years later and the name still works. The friends, the business associates I've made are overwhelming," said Tony. This time around, Chardees Lounge is not about me. My partner in life, home, business, it's all in Andy's hands. He purchased the business, I purchased the building."

"I feel like the Drive is ready for a unique bar that can cross all generations. Come as you are, no judgements, enjoy the music, and relax. In these times, it's better when all generations are united," Andy stated.

Chardees Lounge two night Grand Opening will be Wednesday, December 13th and Thursday, December 14th.

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Notes from brief telephone conversation with Tony Dee, July 30, 2021
by Ron Ulm

Anthony DeRiggi aka "Tony Dee"
954-579-5400
deeproperties@live.com

Dee indicated he bought the entire block where Chardees was located in 1990. (Thuma book says he purchased the north end in 1990 and the south end in 1992. Property Appraiser records do not fully support either statement (even assuming corporate naming). Block was dubbed "Shoppes of Plaza Dee" according to Thuma.).

"The Palms" was a functioning gay club at that location in 1990. Dee's vision was to upgrade it to an upscale gay supper club--with first-class, big name entertainment.

Dee ran Chardees for **five (5) years**, then sold the business; but retained ownership of the building. (Did not get the name Chardees second owner.)

In 2005 second owner sold Chardees to Norman Artzt (according to 2005 *New Times* article). Dee credits Artzt with the demise and ultimate closing of Chardees in 2007. According to Dee, Artzt had no restaurant/club experience (see below-he was a hair salon operator). Dee described him as "flamboyant", and more interested in promoting himself rather than actually implementing the big plans he claimed to have for business.

(Dee then closed the conversation, indicating he had another appointment to go to …)

Internet research shows that in 2009 Artzt was convicted of Federal payroll tax fraud in the amount of $375,000 (for tax years 2000-2004) related to his hair salon in Boca Raton. Sentenced to 18 months in prison and 2 years probation--plus restitution.

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Miami Herald Feb 23, 2014

These New York-style bars often conjure images of older gay men singing show tunes around a piano. That's exactly what you'll find at Tropics, a Broward restaurant and lounge at 2000 Wilton Dr. in the heart of gay Wilton Manors.

"It's gentlemen over 50 mainly," Tropics owner Tony Dee says of his clientele. "What is the appeal? Enjoying music, liking to sing with a mike and letting people applaud, obviously."

For 17 years, Dee co-owned Chardees, a popular Wilton Drive restaurant and lounge now occupied by Bill's Filling Station, a gay bar.

Dee took over Tropics two years ago. Back then, the restaurant had a small piano bar, he says. "I enlarged it to make it a cabaret room."

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Off the Wall: Chardees Redux

Pier Angelo The Gazette 22 November 2017 Hits: 1295

Off The Wall Chardee's Lounge

What do the Mini Cooper, the Volkswagen Beetle, and the Fiat 500 have in common? They are classics and icons from the past that have been brought back with great success and a touch of nostalgia thrown in for good measure.

Now Wilton Manors is getting its own trip down memory lane revived and repolished. Chardees is baaaaack!

In its hay days Chardees was The Place, The center of WM's universe.

It opened in 1990 and closed in 2007. A glittering gay mirage in a desert of boarded-up strip malls, trailer parks, crack houses, and abandoned buildings strewn with garbage. The venue aimed specifically at the mature gay men, or silver foxes, and their admirers.

It was renowned worldwide and featured two legendary bartenders: Mark Hess and Jimmy Molloy. The "Supper Club" as it was also known, headlined entertainers like Eartha Kitt, comedienne Pudgy, singer Jennifer Holliday, and Judy Tenuta. It was the place to go to, by some loved and revered as "the new church," it became a mainstay.

The floodgates were opened in the mid nineties. Inspired by Chardees's success and popularity a slew of gay or gay-friendly businesses followed — coffeehouses, real estate agents, eateries, clothing stores, banks, developers, more gay bars.

In 1997, Jim Stork started Stork's Bakery and Café on NE 15th Avenue; three years later, Wilton Manors elected its first gay mayor, John Fiore. Norm Kent founded the tribe's local paper, The Express, precursor of SFGN, in December of '99. Today, Wilton Manors is the center of Florida's queer galaxy. Wilton Drive is the heart of one of the gayest towns in America: 40 percent of its 15,000-plus residents identify as LGBT.

And it all started with one gay bar.

Tony Dee, The Lord of the Drive, believes that the old magic is still there, the name recognition has certainly survived and he hopes it is still the destination many of the original patrons never left. He says: "Seeing an old friend can put a smile on your face."

We wish him all the best. Chardees Lounge will open soon at: 2440 Wilton Drive. WM 33305

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The story of Stefani Germanotta's 2008 South Florida debut as ***"Lady Gaga"***; including a performance at Wilton Manors' ***Bill's Filling Station***

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in: *2008 concerts, United States, 2008 web appearances*

Winter Music Conference

The **Winter Music Conference** is a weeklong electronic dance music event, held every March since the mid-1980s in South Florida. It is aimed at professionals such as artists, DJs, record label representatives (A&R), producers, promoters, radio and the media.

March 27, 2008 edit | edit source

Lady Gaga's first Miami performance was at The Raleigh for Armani Exchange Music Lounge during the 2008 Winter Music Conference. She was with her first DJ, DJ VH1 and two female dancers (Sheryl Murakami and Kathryn Berenson).

Set list:

1. *Introduction*
2. Beautiful, Dirty, Rich (Demo version)
3. Paparazzi (Demo version)
4. Just Dance

ADD A PHOTO TO THIS GALLERY

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2008 Lady Gaga performs at Miami BeachWinter Music Conference-Raliegh Hotel , Armani Penthouse Suite.- First national tour performance after release of "Just Dance"

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2008 Lady Gaga performs at Miami BeachWinter Music Conference-Raliegh Hotel , Armani Penthouse Suite.- First national tour performance after release of "Just Dance"

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in: *2008 concerts, Unknown setlist, United States, Nightclubs & bars*

Score

Score is the largest club prominently dedicated to Gay men, in South Beach, located in the middle of the world's most famous promenade, Lincoln Road.

March 27, 2008 edit | edit source

Related article: Driven By Boredom

Lady Gaga performed with her dancers and DJ VH1 during the promo tour. Also, she celebrated her birthday that night.

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in: *Gagapedia calendar*

25 May

A list of events which occurred on the **25th of May**.

2008

- Lady Gaga performed at the Bill's Filling Station in the United States.

2009

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May 25, 2008

Lady Gaga performed at Bill's Filling Station with her dancers Dina and Pepper as part of the Just Dance Promo Tour
She wears a latex jumpsuit by Haus of Gaga, a jacket by Maison Margiela, shoes by Burberry Prorsum, and sunglasses by Gucci.

Downloaded from https://ladygaga.fandom.com/wiki/Bill%27s_Filling_Station?file=5-25-08_Bill%2527s_Filling_Station_001.jpg
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South Florida Sun-Sentinel, Dec 17, 2008

Holiday Stocking Affair

The fourth annual event features an improvised gallery of handmade stockings, holiday cocktails and eats, and a showing of some of the best (and worst) in holiday videos on the big screen. Proceeds benefit Care Resource, South Florida's oldest and largest HIV/AIDS service. 8-11 p.m. at **Bill's Filling Station**, 2209 Wilton Drive, Wilton Manors. Free; 954-567-5978 or billsfillingstation.com

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MIAMI New Times

Lady Gaga at American Airlines Arena April 13

BRANDON K. THORP | APRIL 7, 2011 | 4:00AM

KEEP NEW TIMES FREE SUPPORT US

The week before Memorial Day 2008, a girl wearing feathered blond hair, nude lipstick, and huge movie-star sunglasses took a seat at a dining table inside Georgie's Alibi, the venerable Wilton Manors gay bar. She asked to speak with a manager.

"I'm Stefani," she told Mark Negrete, one of Georgie's owners. "I'm a singer, and I'd love to perform for you guys."

That was Stefani Germanotta, a 22-year-old girl whom people in L.A. and New York already knew to call Lady Gaga. She was in South Florida to perform at a Miami rooftop party for Winter Music Conference. She had brought two back-up dancers, a DJ, and the instrumental tracks from her soon-to-be-released album, *The Fame*.

She had "great energy," Mark says. So he told her about Bill's Filling Station, the bar he and his partner own across the street on Wilton Drive. "That's set up with a better sound system, a much bigger stage. She came out and blew everybody away."

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That story began making the rounds in Wilton Manors in the summer of 2008, when it seemed like every gym in America had Gaga's debut single, "Just Dance," on a loop. Then Gaga was on television, performing at the NewNowNext Awards, guesting on *So You Think You Can Dance*, and providing a live soundtrack for the swimsuit competition at the Miss Universe Pageant.

At this point, some folks liked the songs. Some of them felt bad for the singer, whoever she was. ("Lady Gaga? What kind of name is that?") There was something uneasy about her, as if a demented record executive had shoved this unwitting girl into the pop star machine and the transformation didn't quite take. Was she supposed to be sexy? She had the trappings of sexiness. But they didn't quite fit. Her heels were too high, and tottering around on them looked painful. Gaga's blond do was straightened and fell heavily around her shoulders like a metal curtain. And her outfits didn't accentuate her breasts, but her shoulders, which seemed angular and alien.

Weird as she looked on television, "Just Dance" was a standard-issue paean to clubby drunkenness. However, Gaga's second single, "Poker Face," was tougher to pin down. The song had almost nothing in common with anything on pop radio, then or ever. Singing about deception as a means of romantic predation, Gaga stripped every last emotional tell from her voice. "I love it," she declared in each verse, but she sounded dead. Only in the chorus, when she sang, "Can't read my/Can't read my/No, he can't read my poker face," did her voice quicken, sounding anguished or celebratory, depending on your mood.

Which was the real Gaga? On *The Fame*, Gaga sang about the spiritual deadness of materialism and superficiality. But it was unclear whether she was praising it, surrendering to it, or lampooning it. One notably ugly track contained these lines: "Damn/I'd love a boat by the beach on the West Coast/And I'd enjoy some fine champagne while my girls toast." She didn't sound like she was kidding, though that might have been her poker face talking. When Gaga made a New Year's Eve appearance in Times Square, doing "Just Dance" and flying awkwardly through the air in the arms of her musclebound backups, it was still possible to believe she was an aberration – that all the dark ambiguity of her record was the result of some intriguing accident.

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It wasn't, as we all learned sometime in early 2009. It's hard to pinpoint the precise moment when Gaga went from intriguing pop-factory misfire to next big thing. But her sartorially inspired performance of "Poker Face" on *American Idol* that spring (in which she made every other current pop star look boring before she even bothered getting up from the piano) didn't hurt. Regardless, by the time her Fame Ball tour hit Fort Lauderdale in April, Gaga's shows were attended by an increasingly devoted, polyglot fan base that she had already begun to refer to as "little monsters," and her public persona was cemented. The press called her "the new Madonna," but Gaga's real models were men. In her combination of bizarre outfits and pop hooks, she called to mind Elton John, and her lyrical obsessions with dissolution and grit were lightweight Lou Reed. When she released her debut album's final single, "Paparazzi," the consistency of her subject matter – the pathologies of identity, fame, and sex – suggested she was riffing on David Bowie.

"Poker Face," "Paparazzi," and the first single from Gaga's sophomore record, "Bad Romance," are the Grand Guignol love songs that Grace Jones wishes she'd written. As examples of dramatic singing, they have more in common with Elvis Costello's love-as-psychopathy horrorfest "I Want You" than with anything ever to emerge from Madonna's lips. And more little monsters cropped up following the "Bad Romance" video, in which Gaga morphs from wide-eyed virgin to sex slave to avenging goddess in less than four minutes. In the final frames, she strips off her top to reveal flamethrower breasts, which she uses to reduce a Russian mobster to bone and ash. Awkward little Gaga never looked so at ease as she did in that strange, fiery scene.

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Lady Gaga returns to South Florida for two concerts (one at the BankAtlantic Center this Tuesday and another at the American Airlines Arena the next day) almost exactly three years after her impromptu gig at Bill's Filling Station where she performed for perhaps 50 people. At the AAA, she will perform for nearly 20,000. And the show comes at a weird moment in Gaga's career. It's one of the final performances of the 18-month Monster Ball tour, and her new album, *Born This Way*, is still a month away. Its title track has come and gone from the airwaves. Unlike her previous work, it was earnest – a ready-made gay anthem meant to bolster the flagging egos of self-loathing gay kids in places like Nebraska and Tennessee. It contained no obvious artifice. Fame, it seems, has given Gaga a sufficiently monstrous ego to sing what's really on her mind, and what's on her mind is depressingly normal. "God makes no mistakes" is one of that track's many stacked banalities, and it's nice to hear if you're a closeted American eighth-grader, maybe. But growing up, Stefani Germanotta was never a closeted eighth-grader. Her whole life experience to this point seems to have made her an expert on precisely two things: a desire for stardom, and the construction of provocative art. (In college, Germanotta wrote an 80-page treatise on Damien Hirst.) When she sings about the former, or plays around with the latter, no one can touch her.

There is no surviving record of Gaga's appearance at Bill's Filling Station. But there is a video of her concert at Winter Music Conference a few days later. It's daytime and sunny, and there's Stefani Germanotta with her two dancers, backs to the camera, and a DJ cranking up the intro to "Filthy Dirty Rich." When Germanotta spins around, she's a pure pro, mugging like crazy, moving with an ease that would disappear temporarily when she graduated to bigger stages a few weeks later. Everything about her performance screams: I am a rock star!

But she's not. Near the end of the song, the camera pans to the right and we see the faces of the spectators. They're bemused. A woman in the foreground, not five feet from Germanotta, looks hostile. Germanotta must have noticed, but she gave no sign. She was not singing to this small crowd. She was singing to the cameras, to the millions of little monsters beyond the lens, who on that day in 2008 only she could see.

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Lady Gaga's a 'Monster' success

By **Elizabeth Rahe, City & Shore**

APRIL 7, 2011

It was on the rooftop of the Raleigh Hotel that South Florida caught an early glimpse of Lady Gaga. A YouTube video captures the budding pop diva with two female back-up dancers singing and slinking through several soon-to-be hits as part of the 2008 Winter Music Conference. With Miami Beach waves rolling in the background, the wind-blown performance reveals her promise — her powerful voice, catchy dance tunes, go-go dancer moves and a glimmer of the fashion spectacle she would become ... in the form of self-styled mirrored "disco panties."

From those early club performance days to her big-production Monster Ball Tour, South Florida has served as a stepping stone in her career. Over the past several years she has graced a number of Fort Lauderdale and Miami music venues and nightspots, and her visits reflect the stages in her rocket rise to superstardom.

Today Gaga is a five-time Grammy-winning pop juggernaut, over-the-top performer, outrageous style icon and outspoken supporter of gay rights. In just three years, she has sold more than 15 million albums and 51 million singles. Forbes predicts she will earn $100 million this year, based on her Monster Ball Tour — which plays BankAtlantic Center in Sunrise Tuesday and AmericanAirlines Arena in Miami Wednesday — and her highly anticipated album, "Born This Way," due in May. Her single of the same name, an ode to self-acceptance that references gays, the disabled and various racial groups, was released in February, with this feel-good chorus:

"I'm beautiful in my way/'Cause God makes no mistakes/I'm on the right track baby/ was born this way"

Lady Gaga was born Stefani Germanotta on March 28, 1986, and raised in New York City, studying piano and dance from age 4 and eventually working with a renowned vocal coach. By 14, with her parents' help, she was singing and playing her own piano ballads at club open-mike nights. She graduated from the highly regarded Convent of the Sacred Heart in Manhattan and attended Tisch School of the Arts at NYU, dropping out after a year to pursue her dream. Deriving her stage name from the Queen song "Radio Ga-Ga," she performed in a '70s-style pop/rock burlesque show in New York clubs before signing with Interscope Records in 2007.

Fabulous Miami

She was still a little-known singer/songwriter in March 2008 when she played the Winter Music Conference in Miami, a massive global music fest that draws performers, DJs and music industry bigwigs for five days of concerts, parties and schmoozing. Only 22 years old, Gaga was on the verge of hitting it big. Her single "Just Dance" would soon be released, and she was set to shoot the music video in a few days.

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"I love Miami. It's sunny, everybody's fabulous and skinny and tan, yummy," the bubbly performer told an interviewer. She also spoke about her songwriting ability — "I wrote it in, like, 30 seconds" — about her involvement in all aspects of her art and even about the disco-mirrored clothing she hoped to market. "One day at a time, one sequin at a time, changing the world," she said, expressing — even at that early stage — her confidence and ambition.

She appeared at Score, a nightclub in Miami Beach, as part of an Interscope Records showcase. General Manager Luis Morera well remembers when Gaga was rehearsing for her show. His staff was doing some minor construction and everyone just stopped and stared. "Who is this girl, and where did she come from? I thought, oh my God, she is going to be big," he says. He recalls that she drank tea, but she was not yet carrying the china teacup and saucer that would become a frequent accessory. "Her birthday was the next day, so after the performance they brought her a disco-ball cake," he says.

When she returned to Score on May 27 for a "Just Dance" release party, the single was already a club hit, on its way to topping charts around the globe — and the crowd definitely knew who she was, Morera says. Wearing a disco-mirrored bikini, crystal-encrusted sunglasses and carrying her glowing crystal-topped "disco stick," she made an entrance through a cloud of fog and sang and danced her way through "Just Dance," "Paparazzi" and "Eh, Eh." "She was interacting with the crowd ... It was a very good show," Morera says.

Gaga made another stop that Memorial Day weekend, at Bill's Filling Station in Wilton Manors, and asked if she could perform.

"It was one of those spur-of-the-moment things," says Jackson Padgett, co-owner with Mark Negrete of Bill's as well as Georgie's Alibi Bar & Grill across the street. "She said, 'Hi, my name is Stefani. I'm known as Lady Gaga, and I really would like to do a new song I have,' " Padgett says. Although they did not know who she was, they agreed. "She came out with her dancers and put on a show-stopping performance. Afterward she stayed and played. She was so kind and sweet to the customers."

A short time later, Padgett and Negrete were surprised to see the songstress performing "Just Dance" during the Miss Universe swimsuit competition on television. When her first album, "The Fame," came out in August, she sent a signed CD expressing her thanks to "the boys at Alibi and Bill's," Padgett says. "She turned out to be such an incredible lady."

In September 2008 Gaga released her second single, "Poker Face," a dance-pop tune that alludes to her bisexuality. It was destined to be bigger than "Just Dance," winning a Grammy in 2010 for best dance recording.

Gaga revolution

She returned to South Florida on Nov. 1, 2008, opening for New Kids on the Block when their tour played the BankAtlantic Center, and she would return to the arena Dec. 13 for the Y100 Jingle Ball. At first deemed

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not pretty enough to be a pop star, she wrote for other artists, including New Kids, Pussycat Dolls and Britney Spears before Interscope recognized her potential.

Around this time Jeff John, managing partner of Fort Lauderdale's Revolution Live entertainment venue, booked Gaga's Fame Ball Tour for April 8, 2009. If he had waited any longer, he might not have succeeded in getting her for his 1,300-patron concert space.

"We were sold out by New Year's," John says. "She was phenomenal. She had set changes, outfit changes. She was great with the crowd. It was a real good night. She went from our venue to arenas."

Indeed, her popularity — as well as her notoriety — was exploding. The Fame Ball Tour played 69 dates around the world from March through September 2009. In June she was on the cover of Rolling Stone magazine, wearing a transparent costume made of strategically placed bubbles. "I operate from a place of delusion — that's what the 'Fame' is all about," she told writer Brian Hiatt. "I want people to walk around delusional about how great they can be — and then to fight so hard for it every day that the lie becomes the truth."

Self-empowerment and personal fulfillment are prevalent themes for Gaga. She says she felt like a freak growing up and relates to that factor in her fans — her Little Monsters. Onstage, she has preached that they should never let anyone tell them they aren't pretty enough or skinny enough or good enough — all criticisms she says she heard at the start of her career. The tactic inspires immense dedication in her fans, who salute Gaga with "paws up," their hands raised like monster claws. She has mastered the art of social media mass intimacy with her fans, communicating regularly via Twitter, where she has a record 8 million-plus followers, and Facebook.

Gaga won best new artist at the 2009 MTV Video Music Awards in September but also grabbed headlines for her blood-soaked performance of "Paparazzi," a song about her struggle with fame. In November she released "The Fame Monster," depicting fears she had faced on tour. It features "Bad Romance," her fifth Top 10 U.S. single, bolstered by a high-shock-value video that channels Madonna — the artist she is most often compared with — and Michael Jackson. The lingerie-laced plot features Gaga getting kidnapped by wicked supermodels, forced to drink Nemiroff vodka and then sold to a Russian mobster, who goes up in flames on her bed. Gaga ends up calmly smoking a cigarette in a smoldering bed next to a skeleton as her bra erupts in fireworks.

Controversy over her explicit music videos, including criticism over blatant product placement and charges of abusing religious symbols, have only fanned interest, making Gaga the first artist to attain one billion views on YouTube (in 2010).

Despite her provocative tactics, Gaga told Barbara Walters that the greatest misconception about her is that she is artificial and attention-seeking. "The truth is that every bit of me is devoted to love and art, and I aspire to try to be a teacher to my young fans ... who feel just like how I felt when I was younger," she said on

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Walters' 10 Most Fascinating People of 2009. In true chameleon fashion, she appeared in a conservative Chanel suit, reflecting her interviewer — she would later wear a tie and suspenders for a Larry King interview.

Monster Tour

Needless to say, by the time Gaga returned to South Florida Dec. 31, 2009, with her Monster Ball Tour, she had turned fame into phenomenon. She played two sold-out shows at Miami's Knight Center and rang in the new year on the Fontainebleau Miami Beach pool deck. The New York Post had deemed it the hottest ticket in the country, with prices from $475 to $25,000, and Gaga bunked in the five-bedroom Fontainebleau penthouse, complete with private pool and ocean view.

She also made a return visit to Score nightclub, sporting yellow hair and a black bustier costume with fishnet hose and no pants — a Gaga standard. Accompanied by her friend, gossip maven Perez Hilton, her manager and two body guards, she addressed the super-charged crowd from the mezzanine level, saying, "In 2010, Little Monsters, may all your pains be champagnes," and finished with a few bars of "Bad Romance."

"She stayed for a good hour at the club dancing and greeting people," Morera says. No longer able to slip under the radar, Gaga left with her security escort, to the flash of paparazzi cameras.

She continued to tour and make headlines in 2010, being named one of Time magazine's most influential people and racking up two Grammys and eight MTV Video Music Awards. She wore a raw-meat dress as she accepted her VMA Video of the Year award. Why? "For me it says if we don't fight for our rights, pretty soon we're going to have as much rights as the meat on our own bones. And I am not a piece of meat," she explained to vegan Ellen DeGeneres.

With Gaga, who says she art directs every aspect of her life, there is always a message to the medium. This February she arrived at the Grammy Awards incubating in a giant translucent egg. She hatched on stage — garbed in see-through yellow with horns on her forehead and shoulders — to perform "Born This Way" with a contingent of dancers and a pipe-organ solo. She later explained the performance as a metaphor for the birthing of a new race of people that would be free from prejudice. She won three more Grammys, and a week later she was on tour again, playing 41 concerts in 76 days, including the two back-to-back South Florida shows.

There's no word on whether Lady Gaga will return to her old haunts this time around. Score's Luis Morera is realistic about the possibility. "She is such a big artist now, I don't know if her agent will let her. There's always the paparazzi ... Everybody has their eyes on her."

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This article is related to: Lady Gaga, Miami, Grammy Awards, Miami Beach, Fort Lauderdale, Michael Jackson, Chanel S.A.

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| ART |

Exclusive: Lady Gaga Performance Photos From 2008

REED FISCHER | APRIL 7, 2011 | 8:50AM

Amazingly, this date at Bill's Filling Station still shows up on Lady Gaga's website, which keeps a little part of her pre-*Fame* past alive. Back in 2008, the pop singer was just as hungry for domination as she is today, but she was still working her way up.

With her South Florida shows at BankAtlantic Center and American Airlines Arena coming up next week, Brandon K. Thorp shares some more details about Gaga's performance three years ago at the Wilton Manors gay nightclub in his piece for this week's music section. Originally, she wanted to perform at Georgie's Alibi, which is a bar across the street, but owners Mark Negrete and Jackson Padgett knew that Bill's was the right spot for her. "She came out onstage and blew everybody away," Negrete says.

Although no video has surfaced from that night, there are a handful of telling photos that are still up on the wall at Bill's. We have them here.

According to Negrete, Gaga performed "Summer Boyfriend," "Just Dance," and "Poker Face" that night with a pair of backup dancers. Additionally, here is a promotional clip of Gaga "on the set of my video for 'Poker Face'" sent to VJ Barry Browder when the plan still involved wooing Georgie's Alibi for a performance:

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Lady Gaga

7:30 p.m. Nov. 30; AmericanAirlines Arena, 601 Biscayne Blvd., Miami, 800-745-3000 or Ticketmaster.com. Sold out, except for a handful of platinum-level seats starting at $450.

By the time the Joanne World Tour concludes, it will be 10 years since an unknown Stefani Germanotta arrived in South Florida in mirrored "disco panties," telling folks at Winter Music Conference 2008 and, a short time later, at Bill's Filling Station in Wilton Manors, that she had some songs to perform, including one titled "Just Dance." Oh, and she wanted to be called Lady Gaga. Lady Gaga sold out all 20 shows on the opening leg of the Joanne tour, named for the No. 1 album that has spawned the hits "Million Reasons," "Perfect Illusion" and "The Cure." Gaga's fall European concerts were postponed until 2018 due to a bout with fibromyalgia, but at presstime Gaga had not altered the leg of U.S. concerts that begins on Nov. 5.

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South Florida Sun-Sentinel Nov 24, 2017

This may be no surprise to anyone who has seen her Netflix documentary "Gaga: Five Foot Two," or those who were at Bill's Filling Station in Wilton Manors on Memorial Day Weekend 2008 when an unknown Stefani Germanotta walked in and asked if she could perform a song she had recorded, "Just Dance."

"She came out with her dancers and put on a showstopping performance. Afterward, she stayed and played. She was so kind and sweet to the customers," Bill's co-owner Jackson Padgett would recall.

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South Florida Sun-Sentinel, Jun 16, 2017

Southern Nights, 2209 Wilton Drive, Wilton Manors; 754-312-5722; SouthernNightsFtLauderdale on Facebook

Forget the popular TV show "So You Think You Can Dance." Tuesdays at Southern Nights are "So You Think You Can Drag," where everyone is invited to try drag for the first time. Amateurs can go to the dressing room and put on makeup in an educational setting. Queens with more experience stand by to offer assistance and answer questions. At about 11:30 p.m., the show begins as the hostesses kick off with a number. From there, amateur contestants test their skills and battle it out. The best performer wins $100 and an invite to join the cast in Thursday's show. Nicole Halliwell hosts college night on Thursdays, when there are special guests and all-you-can-drink specials. Drag shows also take place Saturday nights with a couple of queens from South Beach. The show changes every week.

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