

Little Jim



Fort Pierce, Florida

Historical Hangout

Historical Hangout



Little Jim Bait and Tackle is situated along the Indian River Lagoon—the most biodiverse estuary in North America. The area has a rich history dating back thousands of years, with evidence of Native American settlements dating back to 10,000 BCE. The area was first visited by Europeans in the 16th century, with Spanish explorers landing on the shores of what is now Fort Pierce, Florida.

During the 19th century, Fort Pierce was a center of activity for the citrus industry, with many orange groves and packing houses in the area. However, fishing has always been a significant part of the local economy, with the Indian River Lagoon providing an abundance of fish and shellfish. In the early 20th century, Fort Pierce became known as the “Sailfish Capital of the World,” with large numbers of sailfish being caught in the area.

Little Jim Bait and Tackle is a small, family-owned business that has been serving the local fishing community for over 60 years. The shop offers a wide range of fishing gear and supplies, as well as live bait. Little Jim is well-known amongst local anglers and locals alike, and is a testament to the importance of fishing culture in the area. Fishing has long been a way of life for the people of Fort Pierce, and businesses like Little Jim are an integral part of the local culture.



A 1970s-era photo of Little Jim's Fish Camp located along the North Beach Causeway in Fort Pierce.



TC Palm. December 2, 2022

World War II had a significant impact on the local fishing industry, as many commercial fisherman were drafted into the military or enlisted voluntarily. However, recreational fishing remained a popular pastime among local residents, and the area continued to attract anglers from around the country.

During World War II, Fort Pierce played a significant role in the war effort. The Navy established a training facility called the Naval Amphibious Training Base (NATB) in 1942. The NATB was used to train amphibious forces, including the famous “Frogmen” who were the precursors to the modern-day Navy SEALs. The base was also used to train soldiers in the use of landing craft and other amphibious equipment.

The location of Little Jim was a guardhouse for Naval amphibious operations, and was also used as a checkpoint for vehicles seeking entrance to the camp where Navy Combat Demolition Units were training. In 1944, upon closing operations, the Navy gave the land and the building to the city.

The SEALs continue to pay homage to this history by visiting Little Jim and suggesting it to visitors of the Navy Seal museum. Stuart News article “SEAL of approval” from January 2011 gave an ode to this continued historic relationship. This small location is a vital memory of the Treasure Coast’s role in World War II, and the Navy SEAL’s continued dedication to Little Jim is also made clear in their letter of support which follows.



TC Palm. December 2, 2022

To whom it may concern
2023

Feb 15th

I am writing this letter to offer support for the Historical and Community importance of Little Jim Bait and Tackle. The history of Little Jim's is told daily through our staff and volunteers here at the National Navy SEAL Museum. When we discuss the training and history that was conducted here in 1942, and how the Naval Combat Demolitions Units (NCDU's) who lived on south Ft. Pierce inlet, then traveled through the cut to the north beaches to train; we always mention Little Jim's and how it was used as a check-in stop for accountability and safety of the men training on the north beaches. It is a historical landmark to us and visitors and locals alike.

Additionally, our guests are always asking where they should go to lunch after their visit, and Little Jim is among the first we mention. The food is great, staff friendly and efficient, but most importantly we mention how they can continue the historical tour by stopping in, seeing a piece of history, and obtain a better understanding of how and why this spot was used back in 1942-43.

In closing, The National Navy SEAL Museum is proud of the history here in Ft. Pierce, and Little Jim's is a key site. There will be progress in the area in the coming years, but we should support and keep historical locations, like Little Jim's for future generations to experience.

Sincerely
CDR SEAL (Ret) Grant Mann
Executive Director
National Navy SEAL Museum

Local

Monday, January 10, 2011 11 MC



Enjoy the lighter side of your morning. Read two pages of comics in full color every day. 148

MONDAY CHAT
WITH LYDIE TRAUTMANN
VGIT working on vaccines for viruses

By Joe Crankshaw
jcrankshaw@stuartnews.com
772-221-4181

Born in Strausbourg, France, Lydie Trautmann earned bachelor's and master's degrees from the University of Strausbourg, and a doctorate in immunology from the University of Paris.

Lydie joined the staff of the Vaccine & Gene Therapy Institute as an assistant member and principal investigator focusing on immune cells that have the power to kill infected cells, thus helping control viral infections.

She is married and has two children. Her husband is a painter.

Q. What does it mean when it says you are an immunologist?

A. That means that I am studying immune cells. I am trying to find out how the "guards" for the human body act to counteract attacks by viruses for which we are not well armed. For the moment, the only way to fight these attackers is with vaccines. That's why we have vaccines for some infections. We don't have them for all infections, and we are still trying to understand how the cells work.

Q. What does it mean when your resume says you are looking at the ways immune cells kill infected cells?

A. That means viruses enter your cells and the only way to get rid of them is for immune cells, called leukocytes (white cells), to recognize the virus is in the cell and kill it to get rid of the virus. Sometimes your immune system is dysfunctional, meaning it did not get rid of the virus and did not win.

Q. Are HIV and AIDS examples of that type of virus?

A. A very good example, because it targets the immune cells and disorganizes the immune system. Then we have a dysfunctional response from the system and are not able to get a clean environment within the cells.

Q. Is it possible to develop a vaccine that will accomplish this?

A. We hope so. That is what we are doing here at VGIT. But we hope to be able to stop all bad virus by understanding what the immune system needs.

When we know how the system works, we can try to find cures for other viruses as well. We can create vaccines which teach the cells how to react when a virus is detected.

Q. Does the fact that this is his season help your investigation?

A. We hope not many people get the flu, but if they do, we hope they may become part of our clinical trials conducted with Martin Memorial Hospital. The only way we can do these trials is use blood from a patient who has the disease.

Q. What caused you to want to get into this field of study?

A. I knew I wanted to do immunology research since the age of 17 for personal reasons.

For more on this interview, go to TCPain.com.

SEAL of approval

Little Jim's Bait & Tackle is popular fish camp, retired Navy UDT SEAL hangout



Dancing to the sounds of the live band Paradise Islanders, Marty (left) and Mary Ann Torney enjoy the Wednesday afternoon entertainment on the deck at Little Jim's Bait & Tackle fish camp. "They have very nice music, a nice place," Marty Torney said.

Story and photos by Eric Hasert
ehasert@stuartnews.com

FORT PIERCE—Representing a bit of old Florida, Little Jim's Bait & Tackle offers not only a popular fish camp, but a small piece of World War II history that helps highlight the Treasure Coast.

The facility is nestled on the Indian River Lagoon along the North Causeway of State Road

A1A, just off the south side of the road at the southwest corner of the Little Jim Bridge.

Although the details are somewhat sketchy with age, the location is said to have been one of the guardhouses for the World War II Naval amphibious operations base on North Hutchinson Island.

Nowadays, the fish camp belonging to Richard and Rita King is on city-owned property. It is a

popular hangout with local fishermen. Fort Pierce residents and lots of retired Navy UDT SEALs during the National Navy UDT-SEAL Museum's annual muster every November.

A small marina dockage gives access to the bait shop by boat and a fishing pier just south of the bridge is a favorite fishing spot. Lots of WWII memorabilia covers the outside wall under a covered

pavilion, where many patrons come to hang out or enjoy live music on Tuesday and Wednesday afternoons.

"We like the music, it's very easy and nice to dance to," said Marty Torney, a seasonal Fort Pierce resident, after dancing to with his wife Mary Ann. "My parents use to come here, which started us coming here a few years ago, and we try to come every week when we are here."



A Frog Man Trail road sign attached to the covered deck offers a subtle hint of the history behind the location of Little Jim's Bait & Tackle in Fort Pierce.



Above: Little Jim's Bait & Tackle is on State Road A1A at 601 North Causeway in Fort Pierce. It's on the southwest corner of the Little Jim Bridge and features a bait shop/store with a kitchen, a covered deck, boat ramp and a marina. Below, left: A photo display featuring a retired Navy UDT SEAL who participated in the annual National Navy UDT-SEAL Museum's annual muster is visible in the middle of the bait shop's store. Below, right: Fisherman Dean Gross of Fort Pierce cleans his catch of lobster and several fish alongside the dock at Little Jim's as patrons listen to live music on the outside deck. "The people, the good times, nothing like Little Jim's," Gross said.



War films to be shown

Carl Keske, a retired captain in the Navy Reserve, will host "World War II in HD," a 10-week series of war documentaries narrated by actor Gary Sinise beginning at 10 a.m. Wednesday at the Blake Library, 2351 S.E. Monterey Road in Stuart. The series, which will run Wednesday mornings through March 16, follows 12 Americans through the war. Keske, who served on several naval vessels, will provide commentary. A question-and-answer session and a quiz will follow each film. Admission is free. For information, call 772-221-1403 or visit www.library.martin.fl.us.

Join United Way tour

The United Way of Martin County will tour two member agencies, House of Hope and Treasure Coast Hospice, beginning at 10 a.m. Wednesday at the United Way office, Suite 10L, 10 S.E. Central Parkway in Stuart. House of Hope provides emergency assistance to Martin County residents who experience a financial, housing, food or medical crisis. Treasure Coast Hospice provides comprehensive, compassionate care to children and families who have suffered the loss of a loved one. For information, call (772) 283-4800, ext. 227.

Things You Need to Know

Mary Jane Saunders, the new president of Florida Atlantic University, will speak to members from the five Martin County chambers of commerce during a breakfast from 8 to 9:15 a.m. Thursday at Hobe Sound Bible College, 11298 S.E. Gomez Ave. in Hobe Sound. The event is open to the public; cost is \$10. Reservations are required. For information, call 772-546-4724 or e-mail jotenn@hobesound.org.

Park to be named
Palm City Park at 2050 S.W. Mapp Road will be renamed in honor of Marine Lance Cpl. Justin James Wilson in ceremonies at 11 a.m. Saturday at the park. Wilson, the 24-year-old son of Lance and Frances "Fran" Wilson of Palm City, was killed March 22 in Afghanistan by a roadside bomb. For information, call 772-221-1352.

Author, illustrator to talk

Author and illustrator Janeen Mason of Stuart will discuss and sign copies of her new book, "Gift of the Maugpie," from 6 to 8 p.m. Thursday at the Blake Library, 2351 S.E. Monterey Road in Stuart.

Mason's book for children is about lovebirds, nest building and shoes, so attendees are asked to bring pairs of spare shoes to donate to the House of Hope charity. Light refreshments will be served. For information, call 772-221-1403 or visit www.library.martin.fl.us.

Earthquake remembered

A memorial service on the first anniversary of the devastating earthquake in Haiti will be from 6 to 8 p.m. Wednesday in room A of the Port St. Lucie Community Center, 2195 S.E. Alroso Blvd. in Port St. Lucie. Representatives from the sponsoring organizations, including the Center for Health, Education and Social Services, the Haitian Advisory Council and the Vero Beach-based Haiti Clinic, are scheduled to speak. For information, call 772-626-8650.

Staff reports

Bait shop to reopen with a bash

Tyler Treadway
staff writer

Little Jim Bait & Tackle will officially reopen Nov. 13, the date of the 14th annual Beer Bash thrown by a group of former Navy frogmen.

"There'll be a lot of retired veterans here that day. And the public is invited as well," said Jim "Patches" Watson of Vero Beach, a former SEAL and longtime denizen of Little Jim's.

The bash usually coincides with the annual Muster traditionally held on Veterans Day weekend at the nearby Navy SEAL Mu-

seum. That event has been postponed until spring because of hurricane damage at local hotels.

"We're going for it, come hell or high water," Watson said of the party.

"I don't know about the first part," replied Richard King, manager of the bait shop with his wife, Rita, "but we might get the high water."

King said the bait shop probably will open a few days before the party.

"But on a limited basis," he added. "It'll take a while to get stocked up."

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Roberta Miner, owner of Little Jim's Fish Camp, looks over a 1970s-era photo of the fish camp at Little Jim's Bridge along with Steve Doane, one of her regular customers and part-time helpers, as volunteers gather to help rebuild the damaged Fort Pierce landmark along the North Beach Causeway.

ERIC HASERT
staff photographer

VOLUNTEERS

FROM A1

stood at the western base of Little Jim Bridge, a checkpoint for vehicles seeking entrance to the camp where Navy Combat Demolition Units — the forerunners of the Underwater Demolition Teams and Navy SEALs — were training.

Minor vaguely remembers a "Mr. Elszak" who owned a bait shack there soon after World War II. Hollis "Holly" Crowell had the place until Minor and her first husband, Charles Palmer, took over in 1978. After Palmer died, she and her second husband, Al Minor, ran it.

The site is owned by the city of Fort Pierce. And after a struggle with city officials in the early 1990s, the Minors got a lifetime lease on the business.

After Al Minor died, Roberta Minor kept the business open by herself — with a little help from her friends.

"But after these recent storms, she's just not up to rebuilding," said Rita King, Richard King's wife. The Kings are taking over as managers of the bait shop for the 68-year-old Minor.

"A lot of us who are longtime customers don't want this area to lose a landmark," Rita King said. "And that's what Little Jim's is, a landmark."

In fact, the Kings are spearheading an effort to have Little Jim's declared a historic site, a petition requesting that has garnered about 4,000 signatures.

This will be the second time for the bait shop to be rebuilt. It rose phoenix-like after a fire in 1980. Many of the ceiling joists and other framework timbers are charred from the fire.

"The main building was built with Dade County pine," Richard King said, "and that stuff's pretty indestructible."

Jim and Gail Wong of Long Beach, Calif., signed the Kings' petition last week. Whenever they visit Jim's brother, Denny Wong of Port

Pierce, they always stop at Little Jim's.

"It's where we get our bait and beer," Jim Wong said. "And they've got the best boiled peanuts around. But mostly, it's the people here — good, friendly people."

Little Jim's caters to the small boats that ply the Indian River Lagoon rather than the large offshore rigs.

"We got a few ocean boats," Minor said. "We get some of everything, people from all walks of life. You don't have to be Mr. Go-trocks to put your boat in here. Now, there are some millionaires who come here — you just wouldn't know it to look at them."

Said Rita King, "Anybody who's a boater on the Treasure Coast knows about this spot, about Little Jim's. It's a bit of old Florida. People come here because they feel at home here."

And not just people.

Every year a pelican known as "Old Gimpy" stops by the bait shop on his migration from Louisiana.

"He flies in, walks right up to the door and asks for a handout," said Steve Doane, a part-time Little Jim employee for the last eight years, explaining that the bird got his name after regulars noticed he was limping and took a couple of fish hooks out of his leg.

"Old Gimpy, he's just another regular."

-tylertreadway@scripps.com

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Aside from its historical significance with regard to the war effort, Little Jim Bait and Tackle embodies the distinctive characteristics of the Florida Cracker Style architecture. The property will be situated in a prominent location on North State Road A1A on the Indian River, making it an easily identifiable visual feature on the waterfront. It is one of the few remaining structures that reflect the region's unique architectural style.

The building is also an example of adaptation in the South Florida environment. In 2004, Hurricane Charlie destroyed Little Jim as with much of the entire city. With the city in shambles, locals banded together to rebuild Little Jim and maintain a semblance of normalcy and community amidst the destruction. After the property was rebuilt, Little Jim officially reopened on November 13, 2004 on the same date of the 14th annual Beer Bash thrown by the form Navy SEALs.

Landmark with allure

Volunteers rebuild Fort Pierce's Little Jim Bait & Tackle

By Tyler Treadway
staff writer

FORT PIERCE — Two days after Hurricane Frances, Richard King took a boat — the only way to reach North Hutchinson Island — to survey damage to Little Jim Bait & Tackle.

"I was looking it over, and all of a sudden, the phone rang," King recalled. "I couldn't believe the phone would be working, and I couldn't resist picking it up. So I answer, 'Little Jim's.'" And this guy from Cincinnati on the other end, a longtime customer who watched the hurricane hit Fort Pierce on TV, asks, 'Are you guys open?'"

Little Jim's, the long-lived, well-known and much-loved purveyor of bait, beer and boaters' supplies, is still closed because of extensive damage from hurricanes Frances and Jeanne. But thanks to the efforts of some faithful customers, the business will reopen.

Just about every afternoon, and especially on weekends, volunteers can be seen wielding power saws and framing hammers at the site along state Road A1A, across the North Bridge from Fort Pierce.

"All these people I've never seen work a day in their lives are working here now," joked Roberta "Miss Bobbie" Minor, who's run Little Jim's for 26 years.

The history of Little Jim's is as convoluted as the trails twisting through the mangroves around it.

Early maps indicate the bait shop is on Little Jim Island along Little Jim Cut and adjacent to Little Jim Bridge; but nobody seems to know who "Jim" was.

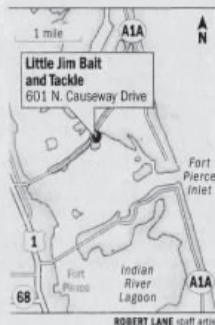
"I don't think there ever was a Jim," said Minor. "Not one that I know of, anyway."

Old-timers remember that during World War II a guard shack

See **VOLUNTEERS**, A15

GRAND REOPENING

► Bait shop to reopen with a bash. **A15**



A 1970s-era photo of Little Jim's Fish Camp located along the North Beach Causeway in Fort Pierce.

ERIC HASERT
staff photographer



ERIC HASERT staff photographer

Volunteer helper Goat Farineau, left, helps carpenter Craig Young reposition a window frame inside the Little Jim's Fish Camp building along the North Beach Causeway on North Hutchinson Island. The building, which was originally constructed in 1941, served as a checkpoint at the foot of the Little Jim Bridge guarding the Navy UDT-SEAL team training camp during World War II and is currently being restored after heavy damage from the recent hurricanes.

Besides its historical, architectural, and aesthetic significance, Little Jim is culturally treasured. Its history has long been marked by legal battles over lease rights; and swift community support has always shown up to try to save it.

In November 1997, under the threat of canceling Little Jim's lease, over 4,000 locals signed in support of Little Jim's, and supporters packed City Hall in protest. The Press Journal of Vero Beach published a sweeping defense of Little Jim one month later, claiming the fish camp "a part of local folklore" and highlighting locals who said "this place kind of brings you door, a hand is raised in warm back to the good old days." Another patron added: "I grew up here."



Again in 2008, when the renewal of the Little Jim lease was up for a vote by the county commissioners, one Fort Pierce resident Gene Edwards loved the place so much that she published an opinion piece in the Stuart News on March 19, 2008. She urged all locals to contact their city commissioners in order to help "retain this neighborly and historical retreat" and remembers how the community of "local patrons" banded together to help restore Little Jim's to code and maintain this "small spot where a hard-struck bunch of locals could find their friends and feel some sense of normalcy" after hurricane Charlie.

Fish Camp Part Of Local Folklore

Owners, Customers Love The Place, Fight To Preserve It

By JENI BROCK STEELE
Press Journal Staff Writer

Little Jim Bait and Tackle has been called many things — an eyesore, a violation of city codes and a pain in the neck.

But those who frequent the historic fish camp just east of North Beach Causeway at Little Jim Bridge on North Hutchinson Island call it home.

Buck Peterson is there every day and there's a simple reason for it.

"I like it here," he said. "I want to come here and so I do. That's why."

Owner Bobbie Miner and her husband, Al, are part of the local folklore.



What they could tell about their battles would fill a book.

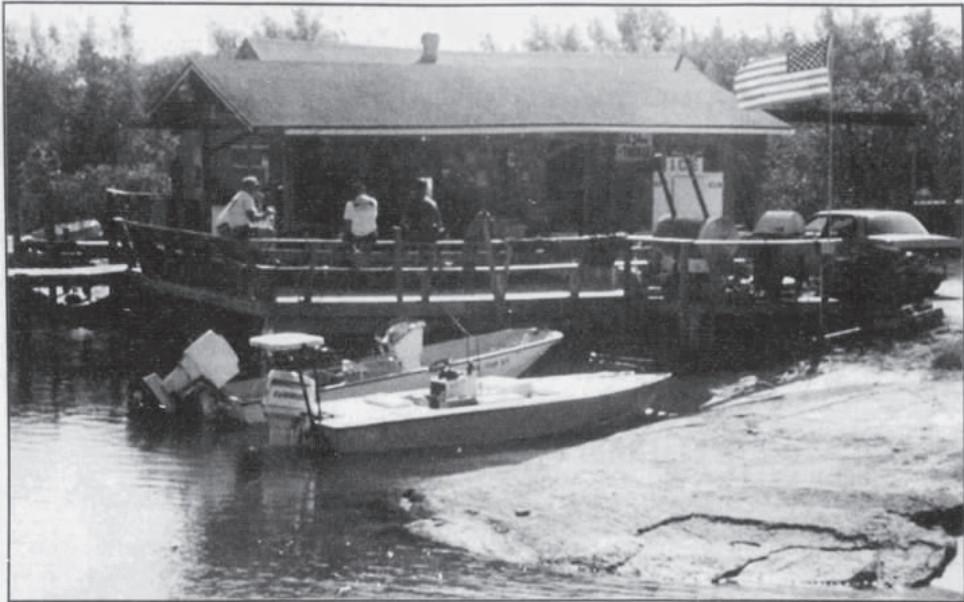
They've battled for the land rights, which once be-

longed to the state but were given to the city as long as the land "was for public use."

Five years ago, the city considered alternative uses for the land and questioned renewing the lease to Mrs. Miner. Thousands of people showed up at the City Commission meeting to protest. The 15-year lease, with a five-year renewal option, was renewed.

More recently, the fish camp was targeted by developers who think the property would be better used as a marina with a yacht club atmosphere.

Mayor Eddie Enns said the proposal is not an issue because the city has a lease, and there's been no need to reconsider.



Press Journal Staff Photo by Jeni Brock Steele

Little Jim Bait and Tackle — or fish camp, as locals call it — is a landmark just east of North Beach Causeway at Little Jim Bridge on North Hutchinson Island. The many customers who frequent the store want it to stay exactly the way it is.

Little Jim Bait and Tackle has long been the David to bureaucracy's Goliath but the little riverside landmark keeps winning because people love it there.

Mrs. Miner could tell you why the community loves the place, but the best people to ask are the patrons.

Patrick Patton filled in behind the cash register last week when the Miners took the first vacation they've had in two years.

Patton is a regular customer who fills in when needed, he said.

"This place has a real historical value," he said. "The natural beauty of the area is what attracts people but they keep coming back for other reasons, lots of reasons."

Some of those reasons include the help Miner offers to boat owners having trouble with their boats, Patton said. The best fishing tips come when Mrs. Miner offers expert advice to novice fishermen.

Boats are rented and fishing gear is for sale.

"This place kind of brings you back to the good old days," Patton said.

Frank Masters, a lifelong resident of St. Lucie County, has been stopping at the corner store all his life, he said.

"It's convenient," he said. "And it's a great place to come for bait, a beer, a hot dog or whatever. I wouldn't want this place any other way."

George Verdes moved to Fort Pierce 12 years ago. He's been stopping in at the bait and tackle store ever since.

"I sometimes come in here five times a day," he said. "It's handy. It's homey and nice people hang out here."

Verdes is one who will sit for a few minutes on the deck out front and talk to his neighbors. The con-

versation there is friendly. Every time a new customer heads for the door, a hand is raised in warm welcome.

Kathy Browning, also a lifelong resident of the county, goes there to buy things in the store other than bait and fishing gear.

She bought smoked fish and Smak, a smoked fish dip, for a small party.

"I grew up here," she said. "I remember stopping here for shrimp, for a drink, or whatever. This is all a part of old Florida and I'm tired of people coming here and trying to tear down old Florida."

That old-Florida, friendly atmosphere is why Little Jim Bait and Tackle has been in the same place for 55 years, and has grown more popular in the 20 years since Mrs. Miner bought it, Patton said.

"You can't get this at a yacht club," Patton said. "Just go anywhere else and try to get service like this. You can't do it."

YOUR VIEW

LITTLE JIM'S

Urge commissioners to keep neighborly, historical retreat

This is my call to all locals to contact their city commissioners to request that they approve the lease renewal request by Richard and Rita King for "Little Jim" camp. My hope is that city commissioners will vote to renew their lease and retain this neighborly and historical retreat, which has existed for us locals since circa 1940s.

Bill Turner originally opened the bait shop; it has been continually operating as a bait shop since then. The Kings became managers after the hurricanes of 2004 destroyed the site. The Kings and local patrons donated many hours to restore the site to code. This community effort gave all that stopped by to visit or pitch in a small spot where a hard-struck bunch of locals could find their friends and feel some sense of normalcy.

The city issued Requests for Proposals for lease and development of Little Jim's and Fisherman's Wharf. The city should develop the Fisherman's Wharf site over Little Jim's. Fisherman's Wharf has an existing boat basin, more uplands than Little Jim and is in close proximity to existing and proposed downtown waterfront improvements.

Little Jim's is one of the last waterfronts that locals, neighbors and visitors can freely access, have a beer, and share tales regarding their catch of the day. Please come to the City Commission meeting (date to be announced) and show your support for the Kings. A handwritten note from Bill Turner's brother summarizes how the locals feel about this site. It is dated Aug. 30, 1991, and written on the back of a blownup copy of a fake \$100,000 bill. It concluded, "If I could, I'd finance any way to keep Little Jim's forever. It's the only place in all my travels over the world I find friendship and peace."

Gene Edwards
Fort Pierce

In 2014, when the lease was up for renewal yet again, "dozens of supporters" crowded the commission chambers in support of the lease renewal. "Little Jim is a piece of threatened Old Florida. According to Anthony Westbury, Florida's history is being nibbled away by developers who only offer plastic and corporate control in return."

Each time Little Jim's lease comes up for renewal, local news media has continually stepped up to voice what all locals know: Little Jim is a treasured community spot, and deserves to remain the way it is. Little Jim Bait and Tackle played a crucial role in Fort Pierce's World War II history. It has been serving the community for over 60 years, and has been a go-to spot for locals and tourists alike for as both a bait-shop serving the fishing community and a cherished gathering space. It is an integral part of our community's culture and heritage. The property fulfills the criteria for preservation under the National Register of Historic Places based on its significance for the community, St. Lucie County, the state, and the nation. "Please don't ruin the Old Florida Flavor at Little Jim."

The Stuart News. March 19, 2008.



TC Palm. December 2, 2022

Little Jim is “one of the last waterfronts that locals, neighbors, and visitors can freely access, have a beer, and share tales regarding their catch of the day.”

-Gene Edwards. The Stuart News.



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Frogman Charity Fundraiser




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**“Please don’t
ruin the old
Florida flavor
at Little Jim.”**

-Anthony Westbury, The Stuart News.





