

APRIL 1982/\$1.25

Inside The Showcase House

NAPLES

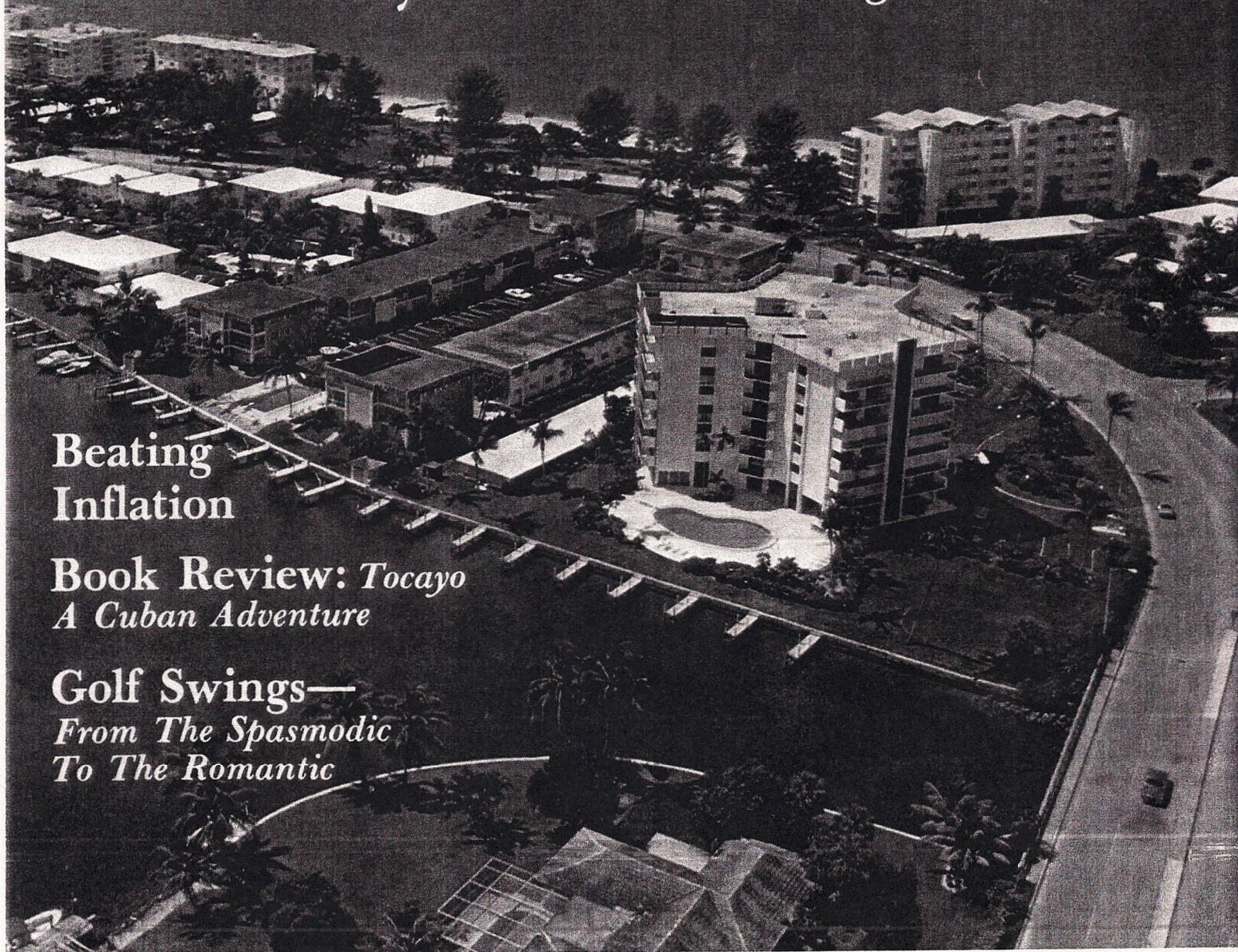
now

The Moorings
Today—*And How It All Began*

Beating
Inflation

Book Review: *Tocayo*
A Cuban Adventure

Golf Swings—
From The Spasmodic
To The Romantic



Publisher's Note

Our story this month about the history of The Moorings is more than a chronicle of a development. It is especially significant because it is the story of an era that is gone forever. It is also the story of a man, Milton Link, who was not a real estate developer in the modern sense of the word.

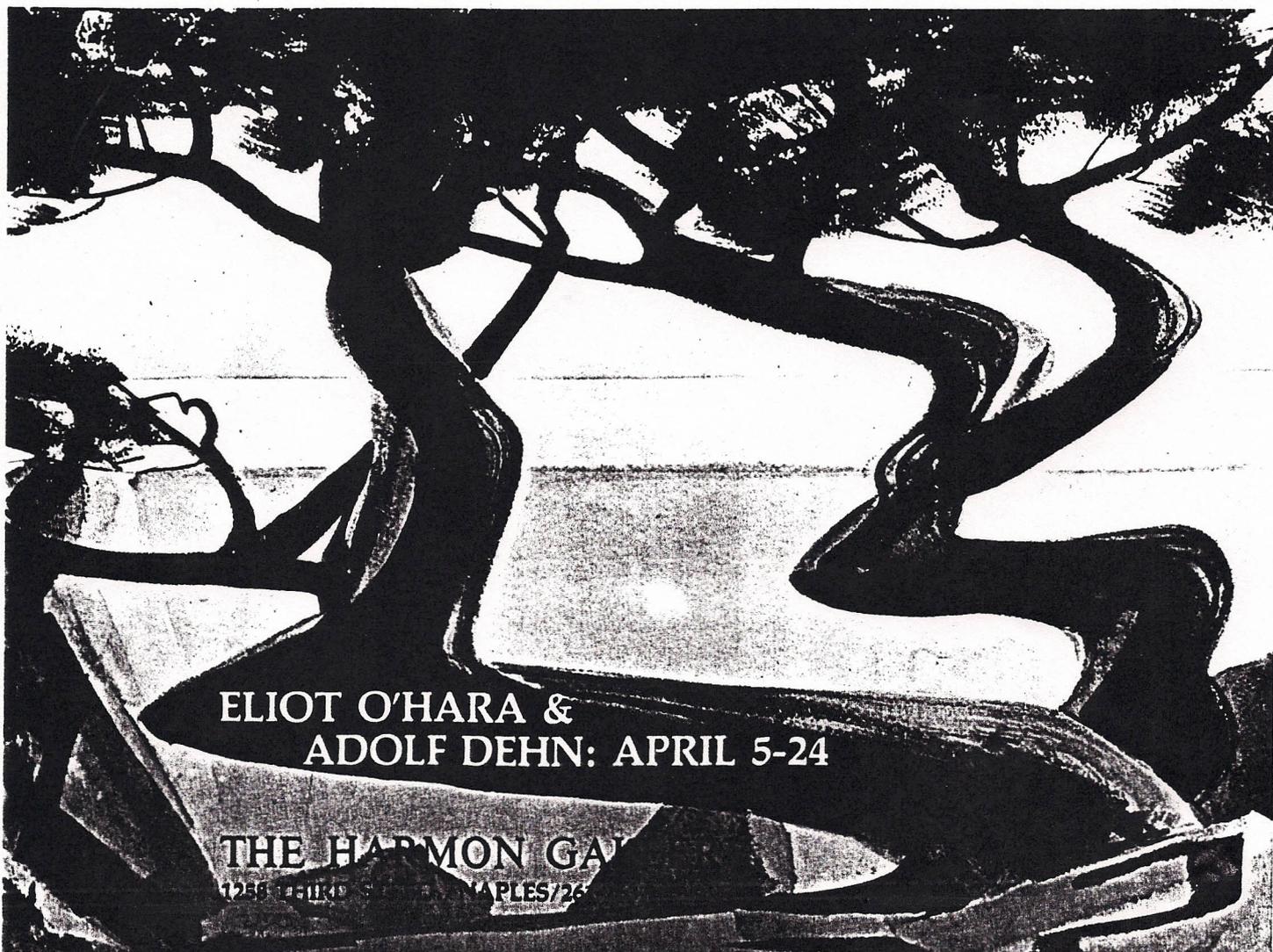
His career had been devoted to landscaping, and the resulting beauty was part of his reward. When given the task of planning and developing the 300 acres of raw land north of Coquina Sands, he used his best instincts and knowledge.

From the very beginning it was obvious that Link had good instincts, good taste, and high standards. He was a man with a mission tempered by a sense of humor. He was a man with vision, and he saw good things for Naples. Although he did not always live in Naples, he moved here and quickly adopted our town as his own. He was one of the few developers who actually lived in the development in which he was involved. He treated The Moorings as his home, and as a result this magnificent residential community evolved into a showcase area with large lots, curving tree-lined streets, deep canals, and spectacular tropical vistas.

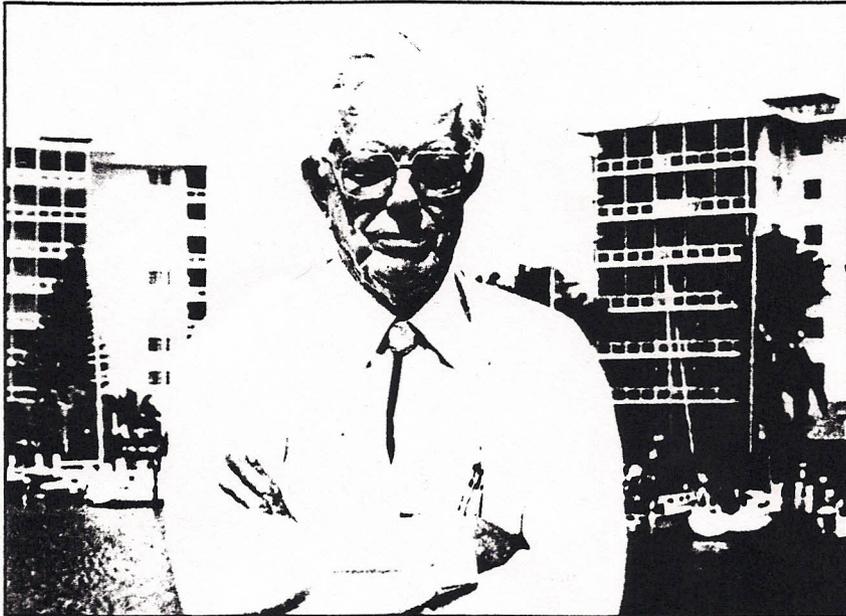
The word "developer" has become an anathema. Many developers have brought this upon themselves with broken promises, questionable business practices, and dishonorable conduct. Here in Naples we were fortunate, indeed, that during the '50s and '60s such men as J.G. Sample, developer of Port Royal; the Forrest Walker family, developers of Aqualane Shores; and Milton Link chose to do more than dredge out inhabitable land from the uninhabitable swamps. They set the standards for a lifestyle that has made Naples into one of the most beautiful cities in the world.

Our achievements are the monuments to our characters, and The Moorings will remain a monument to Milton Link's pride and character. For that we salute him. □

Tom Reynolds



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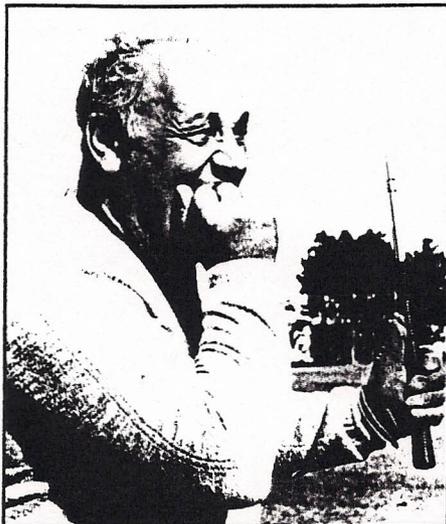
By Lois Hagen
Photographs by Charles Smith
 The Guest-McKee house: refurbished with meticulous attention to original detail.

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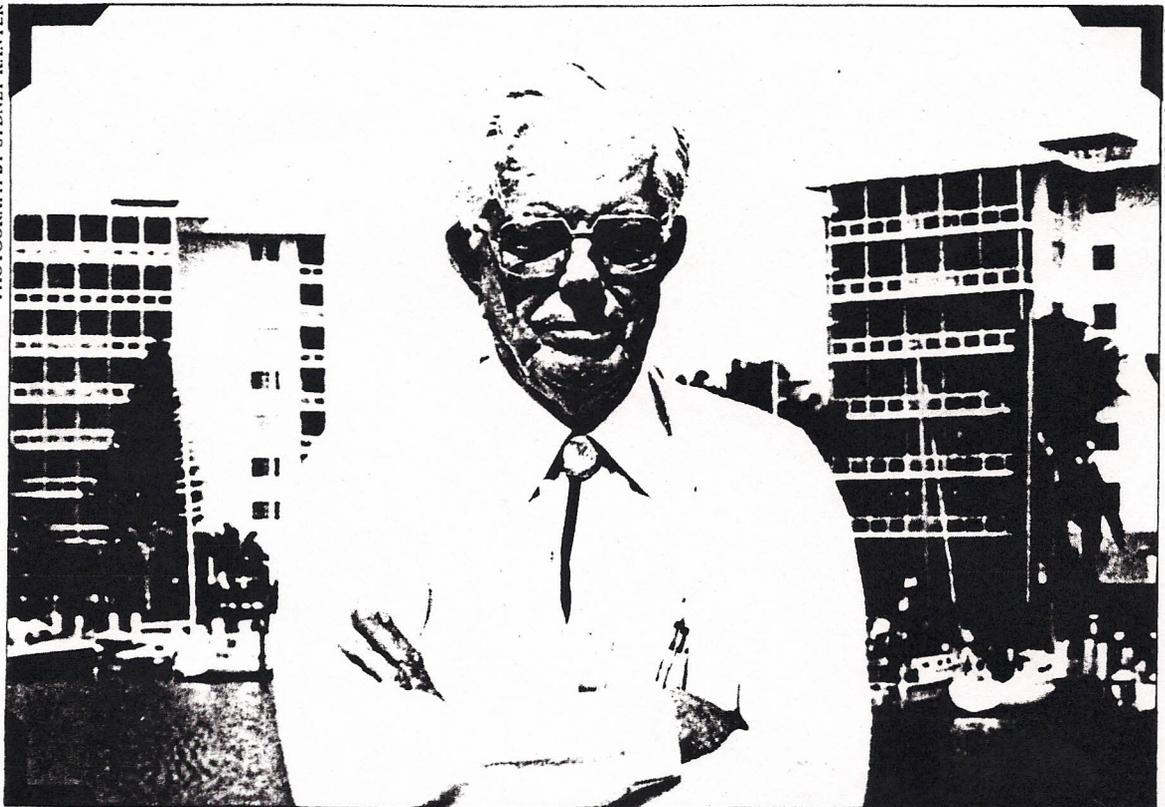
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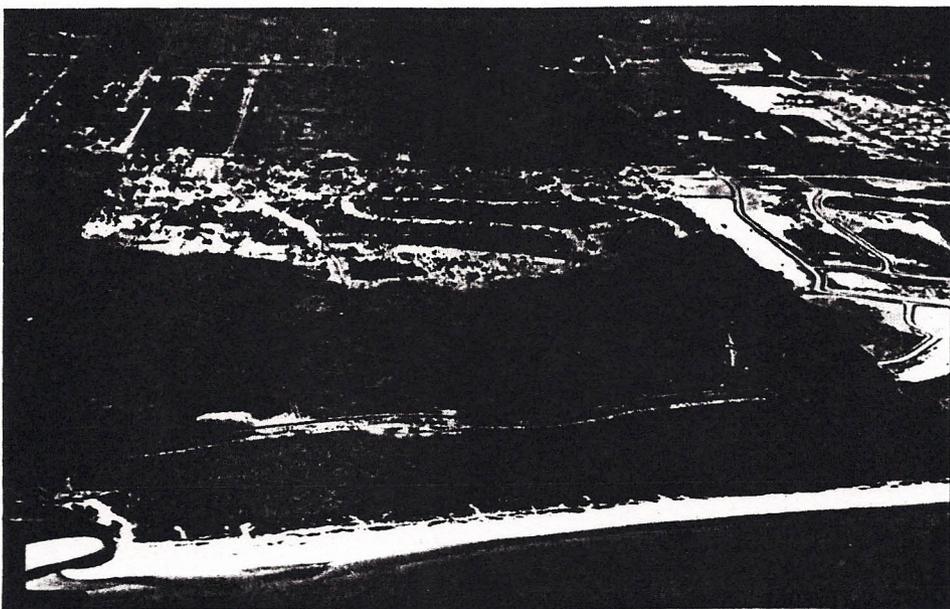
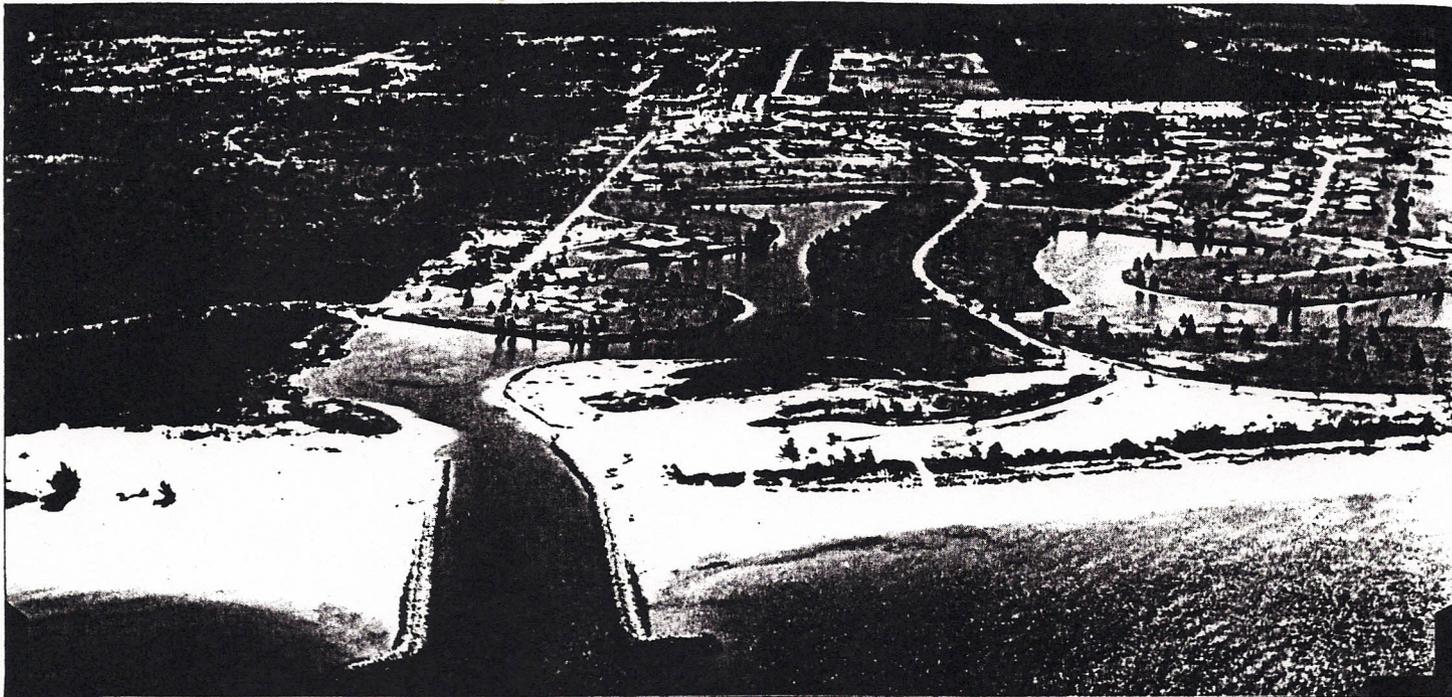
By Doris Reynolds

The Man Who Made The Moorings

PHOTOGRAPH BY SYDNEY KANTER



The Moorings of Naples stands today as a monument to one man, Milton Link, who proved that developers can bring good taste, beauty, and grace to a community.



"As one drives through The Moorings today, it is hard to imagine that it was once a swamp and sand hill area of palmetto and undergrowth...."
 (Top) *The Moorings in 1962.*
 (Below) *The Moorings in 1958.*

On the evening of September 17, 1957, Milton Link sat at the bar of the Beach Club Hotel in Naples and watched the sun set into the Gulf of Mexico. His mood was one of elation and anticipation. For over a year he had been negotiating to buy the Crayton Tract, 1,300 acres of land where The Moorings of Naples is now. The deal had been closed that day for 300 of the 1,300 acres. The price: \$1.5 million. As Link sat sipping his drink, he overheard three real estate brokers at an adjoining table talking and laughing about the "sucker" who had paid an exorbitant price for 300 acres of useless land adjoining Coquina Sands.

But Link was untouched by their mirth. "I knew the first time I ever saw Naples that it would be one of the greatest cities in Florida," he said recently. "We bought the land for The Moorings at the right time and at the right price. It was not an easy project, but it was the most successful thing I have ever done."

H. Milton Link had a history of success in numerous ventures by the time he came to Naples as president of The Moorings. He was born in South Dakota, but his family brought him to LaBelle when he was 11 months old. Young Link attended public schools in Orlando and then went to Georgia Military Academy. He was graduated from the University of Florida where he majored in landscape architecture.

In 1941 he became superintendent of parks in Miami Beach, and under his aegis the city established a series of parks and landscaped the streets with exotic foliage. This landscaping still stands and enhances Miami Beach, a permanent monument to Link and his creativity. In 1950 he became assistant city manager, and then he left Miami Beach for Fort Lauderdale in 1952 to become that burgeoning community's city manager. In 1954 he left city government to establish his own nursery and landscape business. During the war Link served as a lieutenant in the Corps of Engineers from 1943 until 1946.

Before the war in 1938 an event took place that changed Link's life. He had been engaged by Charles Lerner, founder of Lerner Shops, to landscape Lerner's house on Miami Beach. During that time he met the Lerner's

daughter, Sylvia Lerner Kaffenburg. Link, who was 24 at the time, recalls the family.

"The Kaffenburgs were fascinating people. They were older than I and had many influential and interesting friends. Sylvia's husband, Albert, and his father controlled the tobacco market in Cuba, and the Kaffenburgs had a magnificent home in the famed Country Club section of Havana."

Eventually Link was retained as their landscape architect and his "Cuban Connections" were established. He recalled his first trip to Cuba was in late 1938 when he flew to Havana to meet with the Kaffenburg's architect, Raphael de Cardenas. Three acres had been purchased for the site, and cattle were still grazing on the land. Link worked with the architect to coordinate the home with the landscaping. It took more than a year to complete the mansion, considered by many to be the most lavish home in the Caribbean. De Cardenas received an award for having designed the most beautiful residence "of the decade," and a plaque was affixed to the home. Link had designed the gardens in an informal way—a completely new approach to Cuban landscaping which heretofore had relied almost entirely on very formal gardens. *House and Garden* eventually featured the estate, and Link became the favorite landscape architect among the Cuban elite.

Through de Cardenas, Link was introduced to the legendary Julio Lobo, then known as the Sugar King of the World. This association lasted almost four decades. Link's first assignment for Lobo was the renovation of his splendid residence in Havana. From that time on, Link worked with Lobo on numerous residences, sugar mills, and commercial projects, including several hotels in which the sugar king was involved.

In 1954 Lobo suffered a severe heart attack, but rather than impede his drive and ambition it intensified his energies and interests. He was eager to invest in Florida property and asked Link to look into the possibilities and opportunities. Lobo had seen an ad in the *Wall Street Journal*, but after investigation Link came up with a different recommendation. Four hundred and fifty five feet of prime beachfront was purchased in Fort Lauderdale for \$400,000 and was sold two years later for \$1 million. Following that transaction, Lobo relied on Link to recommend and handle other sales of Florida real estate.

It became known in investment circles that Link was on the lookout for good investment properties. While

working in Pompano, Link learned from (then) state Senator Chuck Weber—who is still active in real estate—that the Crayton Tract in Naples was available for purchase. The total acreage was then about 1,300 acres with a full three miles of Gulf frontage. The *entire* property was available for \$3 million. However, shortly after Link first looked at the property, it was purchased by the Collier interests and the land was divided into a series of half-mile tracts with about 300 acres to the tract. Lobo authorized Link to buy the first 300 acres for \$1.5 million. The property was bought from the 33 Investment Corporation, (a Collier subsidiary), named for the section in which it is located. Over the course of the next three to four years, three more parcels were purchased for \$3 million. In the end 960 acres belonged to Lobo, and from this acreage The Moorings of Naples evolved.



Julio Lobo

On the morning of September 18, 1957, Link left his room at the Beach Club Hotel for an inspection of the land he had purchased for Lobo. From the Gulf side of the property there was no road beyond Bahama Club. Link had inspected the land from the air and had read the geodetic surveys, but he now went over the entire site by jeep. The acquisition began at the very end of Coquina Sands. Much of the land from the Gulf of Mexico to what is now Crayton Road was submerged, but on that day Link visualized what The Moorings might someday look like. Looking back to those early days Link said recently, "Of course you could never develop The Moorings

today. It would be economically impossible—and above everything else there are now so many restrictions and regulations that would make it even more unlikely. It took Coral Ridge Properties five years just to get the permits for Pelican Bay. In comparison, we moved very quickly. It took us only about five months before we had all the permits and plats approved."

In mid-February 1958 with all signals go, The Moorings held a breakfast at the Beach Club Hotel and invited all the local real estate agents and public officials. The guest of honor was Mrs. E.W. Crayton, the original owner of the land. Mrs. Crayton had stipulated in the writing of the deeds that the development be planned and approved before the construction could begin. At that first breakfast Link announced that the main artery leading from Coquina Sands into The Moorings, formerly known as Jasmine Drive, was to be changed to Crayton Road.

A new career and a new challenge lay ahead for Milton Link. His love of the land and his understanding of tropical foliage bode well for him and for The Moorings. With Lobo's support, he was determined the project be one of the finest in Florida, and that it would become an integral part of Naples.

Dredging began in the submerged areas of the tract and a huge mound of earth was piled up at what is now Crayton Road and Hawser and a staircase erected so real estate brokers and their clients could climb to the top and look out over what would soon be a residential community. As one drives through The Moorings today it is hard to imagine that it was once a swamp and sand hill area of palmetto and undergrowth and occupied by deer, rattlesnakes, and other wildlife.

Link smiles as he recalls those early months. "We started out like a tornado. The work went along very rapidly, and as fast as we filed our plats and had them approved we'd sell lots. The first lot sold for about \$4,500; many of these had been rezoned for business; so they were snapped up as fast as they became available. This was property just off the Trail in the area around Springline Drive and Alamanda Circle. This was very high land. I remember that Chuck Grimm bought a lot in that area which was 35 feet in elevation. Most homesites were about \$5,500 with waterfront lots going for \$9,500," Link said.

Toward the end of 1958, The Moorings reached an impasse. The Naples economy slumped, and for 18 months only one sale was made and closed in The Moorings. However, Lobo's and Link's faith in the eventual success of the project never wavered. "Julio never took a single penny from The Moorings. He put every dollar back into improving the property. And although we had some tough times, we were very lucky too. There was never any litigation at all in connection with property sold in The Moorings. There were no foreclosures, payments were never late, and we never even received a bad check," Link recalled.

Another blow to The Moorings was the devastating effects of Hurricane Donna in September 1960. This was temporarily a severe setback for Naples and The Moorings. The hurricane actually precipitated the land boom of the 1960s. Just six months after the storm not a sign of the havoc remained, and the heavy infusion of insurance money gave a much needed boost to the overall economy. The results were that people began buying land, building houses, and starting new businesses. The Moorings flourished. Milton Link was right: The Moorings was started in the right place at the right time.

During these years Julio Lobo visited The Moorings four times. He liked the Naples area and although he and Link started another Moorings in Vero Beach, he did not give that undertaking the same attention as the Naples project. When Castro came into power in Cuba, Mr. Lobo lost everything he had on the island. He became involved in a sugar mill endeavor in New Orleans, but he was never to have the phenomenal success

the Gulf of Mexico for a beach for Moorings' residents. Although the city did not require such a park, Link felt that it made The Moorings a more attractive place to insure residents of their own beach.

He was also involved in the building of several condominiums, including Indies West. Link smiled as he recalled what a hard time he had selling these beachfront residences. "The most expensive apartments in Indies West were \$46,000 while the ones on the East went for \$29,500. At the same time we were offering beach frontage in 200-foot parcels at \$600 a foot. When I see what's happened to property value in the past ten years, I'm simply astounded," he said.

In 1963 The Moorings Country Club was built, and the 18-hole par 63 executive course was an immediate success. The Moorings was the first development to have its own beach, its own golf course, and the area's first property owners' association. This group was organized in 1968 with 30 members. The organization now has approximately 2,500 members, an indication of the tremendous growth of The Moorings since its completion.

During his years here, Link became a community leader. He was president of the Southwest Council of Scouting, president of the Naples Chamber of Commerce, and was active in the First Presbyterian Church. When The Moorings Presbyterian Church was built, he was one of its first members. He also served on the board of directors for The Citizen's National Bank, and for several years after he left Naples for the east coast, he continued to come to Naples for the board meetings.

In December 1968, almost ten years

Naples was a very, very special place. Naples is such a beautiful, unique place. You could never duplicate any part of it anyplace else," Link commented recently.

Link and his wife, Susan, are now retired and live in Hendersonville, North Carolina. They still visit Naples from time to time, and he is always amazed that the city continues to grow so much and still retain its high standards. "I just don't have words to describe it. But I do worry about the water situation. The water here used to be so delicious, and now I can

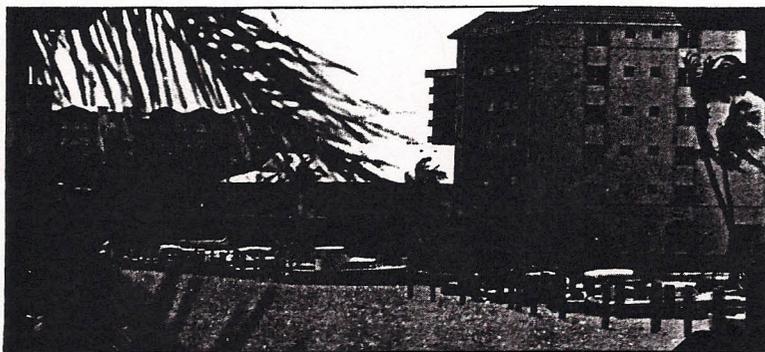


The Moorings: a modern waterfront community.

The Moorings Today

The Moorings of 1982 is a credit to its developers. The neatly manicured lawns are generously dotted with mature shade trees and a variety of interesting landscaping. Many of the gently winding streets lead out to Tamiami Trail North where traffic signals allow for easy access to the well-traveled main thoroughfare.

The Moorings Property Owners' Association counts nearly 2,500 members, and city officials count 854 single-family dwellings and 3,037 condominium units. The 24 or so vacant single-family lots almost never come on the market, according to local Realtor Lou Carey. "They're like hen's teeth, and I really can't even estimate the value," he said. There is space for another condominium—or perhaps several.



Boats fill the slips at a Moorings condominium in 1982.

he enjoyed as the Sugar King of the World. For several years after the Castro take-over, there were numerous lawsuits in which Lobo was involved but The Moorings was never subject to any litigation.

There was good cooperation between The Moorings and the City of Naples. The Moorings put aside 500 feet on

to the day since The Moorings was started, Kenneth Culloden, who had bought a good deal of property in The Moorings, bought all the remaining lots. Milton Link's work in Naples was completed.

Link went to Vero Beach to develop another Moorings for Lobo. But it wasn't the same. "The Moorings of

barely tolerate it. But this is a condition that is prevalent throughout south Florida, and I think the leadership had better address itself to that problem very quickly," he said.

Julio Lobo, now 83, lived in the United States for awhile but is now in Spain. He will probably never see The Moorings as it stands today.

Today The Moorings stands as a monument to what developers can do—they can truly embellish on nature and make what nature has wrought into a beautiful and worthwhile place for people to live. □

One hundred and sixty four multi-family units are still available for development, according to Reid Silverboard of the city planning department.

Lowdermilk Park sits more or less between Coquina Sands and The Moorings, but Moorings residents have their own deeded beach park just north of Lowdermilk. The attractive, 18-hole, par 63 executive golf course on Crayton Road was a big selling point for the development. And today there is an extensive waiting list to join the club that also features a dining room and bar.

There are numerous churches in The Moorings, a number of banks, a large shopping plaza with a Publix, and smaller shopping area that houses businesses and offices. The First National Plaza and the Downing-Frye office center was completed in The Moorings on the North Trail. Several gasoline stations are located conveniently on the west side of the Trail offering easy access for Moorings residents.

Homes in The Moorings cost today between \$120,000 and \$500,000. The more expensive homes are located on canals with Gulf access and include such amenities as boat docks, pools, and lush landscaping. Condominiums cost between \$65,000 and \$500,000, depending on the location, amenities, and size of the unit. But the average price is about \$200,000, according to real estate experts.

Several hotels and restaurants are within The Moorings, including The Sheraton, The Tides Motor Inn, and the Best Western Buccaneer. □

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