

Submarines and Soldiers

FORT LAUDERDALE AND WORLD WAR II

by Paul S. George

Even before the United States entered World War II on December 8, 1941, Fort Lauderdale had experienced the conflict at first hand. On December 19, 1939, just three months after the war began in Europe, the *Arauca*, a German freighter, entered Port Everglades to escape the British cruiser *Orion*. The German vessel remained in port for nearly sixteen months while the *Orion* waited offshore for it. Finally, on April 1, 1941, the *Arauca* and her crew of fifty-two were taken into custody of the United States government under a law delimiting the period of time a belligerent ship was permitted to remain in a neutral port. Officials removed the crew and detained it at Coast Guard Base Six, on Fort Lauderdale Beach. On the following day, the Coast Guard moved the crew to the Broward County jail, where it remained for one week before leaving for incarceration on Ellis Island in New York.¹

In this period, as America inched closer to war, Fort Lauderdale was riding a wave of prosperity built around a flourishing tourist trade and the rebirth of its construction industry. The city's huge bonded debt, a relic of the boom-era and the ensuing depression, had dissipated significantly. New automobiles, long a rarity, were once

again a familiar sight along the city's streets. New stores continued to open in the downtown sector.²

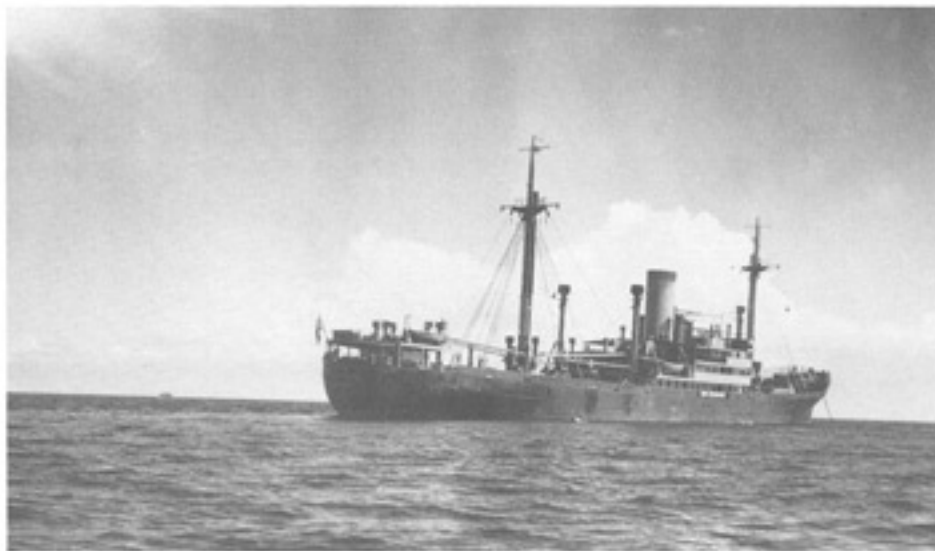
Despite a steady growth, Fort Lauderdale continued to exhibit small town characteristics. The circumstances surrounding the employment of J. Lester Holt, a future chief of police,

provide one illustration of this point. In November 1941, Holt, who had recently quit his job as a bus driver, was walking past the downtown police station when an acquaintance on the force yelled: "Hey, Les, do you want a job?"³ Holt expressed his interest in the prospect, and completed a written

Like Americans everywhere, Broward County citizens contributed their share toward winning World War II, both on the homefront and on the battlefield. But more than most areas of the United States, Broward County also experienced the war at first hand. This became evident early in the conflict when German submarines began attacking Allied shipping within view of the shore. As the war progressed, the long coastline, coupled with the presence of a major seaport, flat landscape, and year-round warm climate, made the area a prime training location. As Broward's largest city and the county seat, Fort Lauderdale was the focal point for much of this activity.

Although the war took place almost a half-century ago, its impact is still being felt as Broward County and much of Florida struggle with the rapid population growth which began when many of the servicemen stationed here during the war returned to make their permanent residence amidst the subtropical climate and surroundings.

Fort Lauderdale's exciting World War II history is here recounted by Dr. Paul S. George, manager of the Historic Broward County Preservation Board and professor of history at Florida Atlantic University and the University of Miami. Dr. George is also well-known as "the walking historian of southeast Florida." This article is an excerpt from his manuscript, "Surging in New Directions: Fort Lauderdale, 1911-1945," second in a three-volume comprehensive survey prepared for the Preservation Board.



The German freighter *Arauca*, anchored off Port Everglades, 1939.

examination on the following day. One week later, the police department hired him as a patrolman; Holt received his equipment and uniform, and his lone piece of training instruction: "Report at midnight and don't start anything you can't finish."⁴

Three weeks later, on December 7, 1941, many residents and tourists in Fort Lauderdale were enjoying a balmy Sunday on the beach; others were fishing, lured by reports of a good run of mackerel and bluefish in the waters about the city. Tom Neel, who worked as a free lance photographer, was observing a meeting in City Hall when a man entered the room and shouted the news that the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor.⁵

The city's direction changed in-

stantly. Hoteliers, restaurateurs, and many elements of the labor force who had looked forward with great anticipation to the tourist season then underway suddenly faced the necessity of a radical readjustment, for the prospects for tourism in wartime were dim. Within hours of the surprise Japanese attack, Fort Lauderdale had been placed on a wartime footing, as the United States Navy imposed a security blanket over Port Everglades. The base's commander, Lieutenant Commander William Ives, ordered all port workers photographed. Henceforth, workers entering the facility would be required to present photographic identification.⁶

The *Fort Lauderdale Daily News and Evening Sentinel* reported on

December 8, 1941, that residents were at first stunned by the news of Pearl Harbor, but they had recovered quickly and "were ready to wade in with every resource they have. Everywhere," the newspaper observed, "there seems to exist an attitude of I want to do what I can."⁷ In an editorial on page one of the journal, owner-publisher Robert H. Gore promised that "Japan will regret yesterday."⁸ Many men hurried to enlist in the armed forces. The *Daily News and Evening Sentinel* reported that six veterans of World War I had appeared at the post office earlier in the day, requesting information on enlistment in the armed forces. Earl Middleton, a local jeweler, proposed that all business houses and private homes display an American flag "from now on out."⁹

This enthusiasm mingled with apprehension as fear of an enemy invasion swept the community. The *Fort Lauderdale Daily News and Evening Sentinel* attempted to allay this fear, but several allied ship sinkings off the coast of Fort Lauderdale in the first half of 1942, a grim period for America and her allies, only increased the concern. The first sinking occurred on January 15, when an unidentified merchant ship was torpedoed off the southeast coast of Florida. On May 4, a German submarine torpedoed the British tanker, *Eclipse*, within sight of the shore. The crippled ship was towed to Port Everglades. On the following day, another torpedo struck the *Java Arrow*, an American tanker loaded with gasoline additive. Five men lost their lives while the cargo was saved and naval tugboats towed the battered vessel to Port Everglades. Philip Weidling, a journalist and chronicler of Fort Lauderdale history, main-

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FORT LAUDERDALE DAILY NEWS

MEMBER THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

AND EVENING SENTINEL

TELEPHONE SERVICE AND TELETYPE

Weather
 Forecast
 12:00 P.M.
 3:00 P.M.
 6:00 P.M.
 9:00 P.M.

The YEAR: NO. 89

FORT LAUDERDALE, FLORIDA, MONDAY, DECEMBER 8, 1941.

PRICE FIVE CENTS

U. S. Congress Formally Declares War Against Japan After Pacific Attack

Japs Claim Victory Over Pacific Fleet

REDS HITTING OUT AT NAZIS NEAR MOSCOW

Roosevelt Offers Historic Speech Asking That Nation Plunge Into Bloody Strife

NIPPON SAYS

UNITED WE FIGHT

Nazis Admit May Not Take Capital For Another Year

By R. H. GORE.



Fort Lauderdale's Home Guard drills on Andrews Avenue in front of City Hall and the fire and police stations, 1942.

tained that he knew of eighteen ships sunk by German submarines in waters off Fort Lauderdale. Another observer claimed that the number of vessels victimized in this manner was much higher.¹⁰


By 1943, Nazi submarines had left the Atlantic waters around Fort Lauderdale as the war began to tilt against Adolf Hitler's Third Reich. However, Fort Lauderdale had already responded to the nearby presence of

enemy ships in a variety of ways that would continue long after the threat had passed. Like other cities along Florida's Gold Coast, Fort Lauderdale observed nightly blackouts; armed men patrolled the beach; and the United States Coast Guard Auxiliary, along with the Civil Air Patrol, maintained a watch for enemy submarines in the vicinity. This vigilance required both military and civilian involvement, and both factions met the challenge successfully.¹¹

Block captains, drawn from the civilian population, patrolled the city's neighborhoods nightly, ensuring that windows were covered with sheets; they checked moving vehicles to ensure that the top half of the glass covering their headlights was painted black to reduce the chances that enemy submarines would oversee the shining light. Street lights were hooded as an additional measure to mute the lights on shore.¹²

Civilian powerboat operators patrolled the waters of the Atlantic Ocean as part of Flotilla No. 2 of the Coast Guard Auxiliary. The boats were employed day and night along the entire length of Broward County's coastline. They reported all submarine sightings, waved small craft away,

A Handbook for
AIR RAID
WARDENS



United States
OFFICE OF CIVILIAN DEFENSE
Washington, D. C.

BROWARD COUNTY DEFENSE COUNCIL
505 PLUM CROFT HOUSE
FORT LAUDERDALE, FLORIDA

February 25A
1944

LIST OF DISTRICT AIR RAID WARDENS

1- E.L. Fox-Gardner	3018 Alhambra St	2332 ✓
2- Sam Drake	2616 Hibiscus Pl	382 ✓
3- E.E. Styer	1118 S.E. 4th Ave	2710 ✓
4- J.E. Tillman	118 S.E. 10th St	404 ✓
5- P.J. Smith (res.)	480 S.E. 5th Ave	
6- E.E. Styr	587 S.E. 9th Ave	
7- Cliff Egan	116 S.E. 17th Ave	80 W 47-2711 ✓
8- C. Johnson	2403 S.E. 2nd St.	1974 ✓
9- John Cox	127 S.E. 1st St.	1080 ✓
10- Shelby Trumble	812 S.E. Second St	1547 ✓
11- Al Pate	1137 S.E. 3th Pl	1381 ✓
12- Ben Sandriksen	508 S.E. 11th St	2358 ✓
13- Tom Gresh	1725 S.E. 8th St	1176 ✓
14- J.S. Silkepile	1214 S. 2nd St	
15- E.E. Ponce	410 S.E. 13th St	1289 ✓
16- Dr. J.W. Eirk	836 S.E. 12th St.	2882 ✓

E. E. Styr
S.E. DISTRICT
Chief Warden Phone 282

918 Hout

Documents from the Historical Commission archives emphasize the importance of civil defense in wartime Fort Lauderdale.



The United States Coast Guard's mounted beach patrol parades on the grounds of their headquarters, the Silver Thatch Inn at Pompano (photo courtesy of R. L. Landers).

and engaged in rescue efforts. The flotilla was credited with rescuing 2,453 survivors of torpedoed ships. As the Coast Guard gradually took over the duties of the flotilla in 1942, this volunteer force assumed responsibility for ensuring the security of the waters in and around Port Everglades.¹³

The Civil Air Patrol represented, after a fashion, the aerial arm of the Coast Guard Auxiliary's Flotilla No. 2. Comprised of local pilots, many of whom were women, the Civil Air Patrol employed private airplanes for flights over submarine infested waters. The squadron was unarmed, and it could only advise of the presence and location of the enemy, but its reconnaissance efforts were important to American intelligence gathering efforts.¹⁴

Another element of civilian support for the war effort came from airplane

spotters. One soldier who was stationed in Fort Lauderdale for part of the war recalled that "they had [civilian] spotters on the Sweet Building and a number of places around town. In those days, the spotters volunteered their services for two or three hours a day, or whatever was necessary. Twenty-four hours a day they kept them manned."¹⁵

For all of its enthusiasm, Fort Lauderdale's civil defense program suffered from the absence, in the early years of the war, of bells and sirens that could send out a loud signal in the event of an enemy attack. Accordingly, resourceful officials bent a railroad tie into the shape of a triangle and commandeered a sledge hammer for the purpose of applying a solid jolt to it, prompting a loud, cacophonous sound, which became for a time the

official air raid warning!¹⁶

Along with the flurry of volunteer activity was a Coast Guard which also displayed great energy in a variety of projects. The Guard built watchtowers along the beach to assist in reconnoitering enemy activity in the nearby waters. It built barbed wire fences that helped close off the beach to all but those with special security passes. Mounted members of the Coast Guard patrolled the waterfront with attack dogs throughout each day and night. The Guard also patrolled the Intra-coastal Waterway and guarded the bridges that crossed it. During this period fishing boats were prohibited from leaving the waterway without permission from the Coast Guard. There is no record of enemy infiltrators or saboteurs entering Fort Lauderdale during the war, although a few hundred miles north of the city four Nazis landed on the beach at Ponte Vedre near Jacksonville. They were quickly apprehended.¹⁷

The war came close to Fort Lauderdale in still another way in the days following America's entry into the conflict. On January 12, 1942, Alexander (Sandy) Nininger, Jr., a graduate of Fort Lauderdale High School and the United States Military Academy, was killed in action at Abucal on Bataan in the Philippines. Born in Atlanta, Nininger had moved with his family to Fort Lauderdale as a youth; the family lived near the New River. Young Nininger worked as an usher in the Sunset Theatre on Andrews Avenue which was managed by his father. Upon graduation from West Point in 1941, Nininger joined the Philippines Scouts.¹⁸

Nininger was in the Philippines at the time that the United States became a belligerent. As a member of the First Battalion, 57th Infantry, Nininger labored for several days and nights



The first Congressional Medal of Honor awarded during World War II (center) and other decorations

conferred on Fort Lauderdale's "Sandy" Nininger are displayed here, along with Nininger's portraits.



Dedication of the United States Navy Section Base at Port Everglades, 1942.

falling mangrove trees in an effort to establish a field of fire against a murderous Japanese force in the vicinity. Despite his fatigue, Nininger requested, and received, permission to hunt Japanese snipers who permeated the area. The young soldier killed more than twenty Japanese with grenades, but was wounded in the process. After exhausting his armaments, Nininger began bayonetting Japanese in fox-holes. Finally, weakened from his wounds, the loss of blood, and exhaustion, Nininger died. The body of a dead Japanese officer lay across Nininger's legs at the time of his death. (Seventy-five other residents of Broward County, the majority of them from Fort Lauderdale, would lose their lives as members of the armed forces before the war ended.) Because of his heroism, Nininger received posthumously the first Congressional Medal of Honor awarded by his nation during the conflict.¹⁹

At the time of Nininger's display of heroism, Fort Lauderdale officials, worried about the impact of war on the city's tourist-oriented economy, instituted a study under the direction of the Chamber of Commerce to devise a plan for those extra-ordinary times. The Chamber surveyed the assets of Fort Lauderdale and its environs and came up with a sanguine forecast. The city's climate and its proximity to the ocean

made it ideal for military aviation, while its hotels and tourist apartments could accommodate members of the armed forces stationed there. Moreover, Port Everglades was close to many supplies of raw materials for war use, and its huge oil storage capacity provided an ample source of power for industries which used the facility.²⁰

Port Everglades fulfilled the roseate expectations of the Chamber, working to capacity as one of the "hottest spots" in the area during the war. It maintained extensive tank farms for the storage of petroleum products, along with modern loading and unloading equipment. Fuel for the defense of the entire Caribbean was stored there. The Navy stored molasses imported from Cuba in large tanks for transshipment to England where it was converted into industrial alcohol and later into explosives. The seaport also hosted an underseas warfare experimental station, and a navy boat service for the recovery of torpedoes dropped in training runs by planes from Fort Lauderdale's Naval Air Station. In the early part of the war, many of the smaller boats torpedoed by German submarines in the nearby waters were brought to Port Everglades where they were rebuilt and reconditioned. Chief Boatswain's Mate Joe B. Oliver, who was in command of torpedo retrieval



Port Everglades as it appeared during the war. The large ship docked at left center is the converted aircraft carrier *Everglades*. The small boats at the

wooden docks in the slip at upper right are torpedo retrieval and target boats.



An angry Donald Duck, riding on a torpedo bomb, was the insignia of the Fort Lauderdale Naval Air Station.



The Naval Air Station as it appeared during the war (U.S. Navy photo by John Evans, courtesy of Allan F. McElhiney, Naval Historian).

and target boats at this facility, believed that "Port Everglades played one of the biggest parts of any port in the country, because it was a training port and also they'd bring in those old shot-up tankers. Then they had a PT training base in Miami, and, on a rough day ... they used to send those guys up here for our boys to teach them how to dock boats. It didn't make any

difference whether it was rough or calm. We were busy all the time.²¹

Because of the vital role it played in the nation's defenses, the port came under tight security with members of the United States Coast Guard stationed around its perimeter at all times.²²

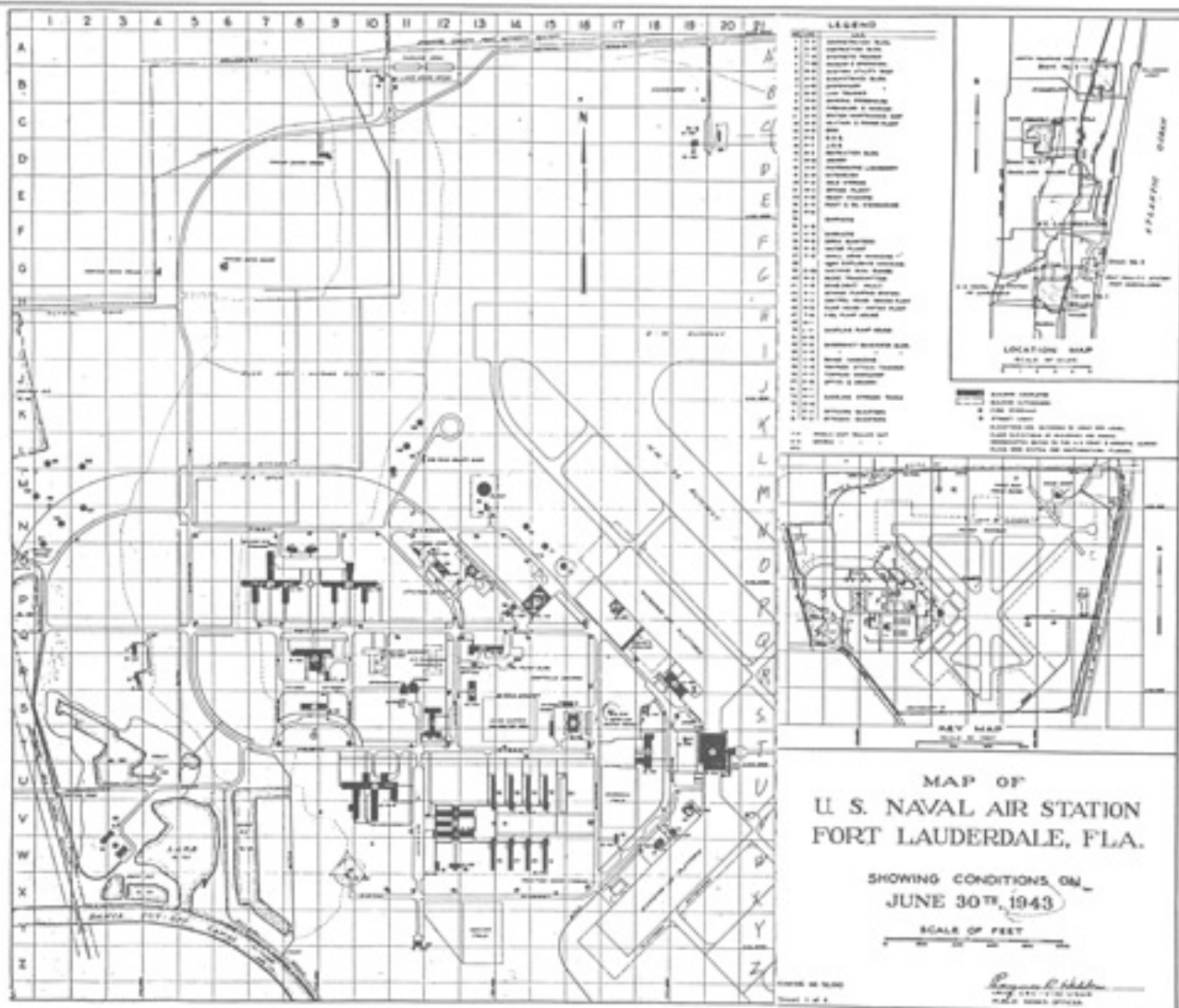
The activities at Port Everglades were linked closely with those at the

Naval Air Station, Fort Lauderdale's largest military installation. In early 1942, the United States selected Fort Lauderdale as one of seven host areas for a naval air station in Florida. The city was ideally suited for this role for many reasons. Fort Lauderdale's climate permitted year round flying; the depth of open sea was sufficient for training purposes, and its location on the edge of the Everglades provided unlimited areas for bombing targets and ranges.²³

Soon after the Navy designated Fort Lauderdale as the site for an air station, it purchased the old Merle L. Fogg airport from the city, as well as land adjacent to it, and began construction of the facility in April 1942. Construction proceeded at a breakneck pace on the air station, which was designed for training torpedo bomber pilots and their crews. Upon completion, the Naval Air Station sprawled over 1,000 acres, counted 4,000 feet of runways, and hosted 217 buildings. It could accommodate 3,000 persons. The first aircraft flew out of the airport on September 20, 1942. Two months later, the base was fully completed and turned over to the Navy. Additions to the station in subsequent years increased its size significantly, and it remained active until October 1, 1946. The Fort Lauderdale Naval Air Station was one of only two stations in a command, extending from Florida to Illinois, that provided combat training for pilots and crewmen of the Navy



Servicemen on the beach, April 1943, a familiar sight in wartime Fort Lauderdale.



torpedo bomber planes, including the TBM Avenger. Dubbed the "old turkeys" and "pregnant ducks" for the bulge in their bellies, the TBMs were among the most rugged torpedo bombers of World War II. During the four years that Fort Lauderdale's Naval Air Station was in operation, thousands of pilots and crewmen took their training on these planes before leaving for combat, primarily in the Asiatic Theater. The attack planes that they mastered were employed in the aerial destruction of the Japanese Navy.¹⁴

Joe Steiert, who worked at the Naval Air Station in 1943 as yard officer, security officer, and OPA (Office of Price Administration) rationing officer, recalled, four decades later, the scale of operations at the facility: "The regular air station crew would run about the same size as a big carrier today, roughly 4,000 people, plus maybe 350 to 400 civilian workers. We would train 250 pilots and 750 air crewmen, who were radiomen and gunners ... The civilian people were employed in various positions from clerks to maintenance to supply department. We were constantly bringing new men in and sending them out to the fleet. The incoming pilots and aircrewmen were being turned over at the rate of about six to eight weeks, and that was a constant turnover."²⁵ Steiert also noted that English flyers received training, under their own commanding officers, at the Naval Air Station.²⁶

Among the thousands of naval personnel to receive training at the Fort Lauderdale Naval Air Station was a future President of the United States, George Bush, who was stationed at the base for three months in 1943. Forty-six years later, Bush, then in the White House, reminisced about his experience at the Naval Air Station and the spirit which characterized the young trainees: "I went off to Fort Lauderdale to learn to fly. Training up and down the East Coast ... dropping dummy bombs and torpedoes in Lake Okeechobee ... Miami. I saw 'em all. I had an ensign's stripe and an admiral's confidence. I was a Navy Pilot."²⁷

In addition to the Naval Air Station in Fort Lauderdale, the military constructed other aviation facilities in Broward County. Satellite airfields of the Naval Air Station arose in Pompano and West Prospect, while Davie, Forman, North Perry, and South Perry fields were constructed as satellite fields for the huge Miami Naval Air Station at Opa Locka. Naval radar and range finding training schools operated at the Lauderdale Beach and Tradewinds Hotels (with classes graduating every sixty days); gunnery



TBM Avenger torpedo bomber (photo courtesy of Allan F. McElhiney, Naval Historian).

ranges were established on the beach at Lauderdale-By-The-Sea and at Port Everglades which, in addition to operating the aforementioned training programs, also provided the boat facility for practice torpedo runs.²⁸

North of the port, at Bahia Mar, an expanded Coast Guard base became the new home of the 50th United States Coast Artillery unit, which moved into the Bahia Mar facility in the summer of 1942. The artillery employed four guns on the beach; because of their size, they were pulled to their sites by

four-wheeled vehicles, and camouflaged when not in use by simple white canvas. At the same time, a five-man searchlight team from the 265th Coast Artillery moved into the Bahia Mar station, bivouacking in tents near the recreation building while waging a futile fight against the flies!²⁹

Fort Lauderdale also contained its own war-related industries, as the Chamber of Commerce's drive to bring government-contracted work to the area met with noteworthy success. Local businesses operating with



NAS Fort Lauderdale's most famous trainee, Ensign George H.W. Bush and crewmates, August 11, 1943. Back row (left to right): 2nd Lt. Bill Donovan, Ens. Ralph L. Cole, Jr., 2nd Lt. Mort Landsberg, Bush, Ens. Louie Grab. Front row (left to right): Ens. Mike Goldsmith, Ens. Leslie Mokry, Ens. William Shawcross, and instructors Ltjg. Tom Campion and Lt. Tex Ellison (U.S. Navy photo courtesy of Capt. Leslie E. Mokry, U.S.N.R., Ret., provided by Allan F. McElhiney, Naval Historian).

government contracts produced large orders of boats, shells, and radio and electronic equipment under demanding deadlines. Dooley's Basin and Dry Dock on the New River at Southwest Fifteenth Avenue represented the largest war-related business. Three hundred employees working amid an ever-expanding plant produced large mine sweepers, submarine chasers, and air rescue boats. One of the company's greatest difficulties was maneuvering boats down the New River, which was still badly silted, and negotiating the turn at Tarpon Bend.³⁰

Gate City Sash and Door Company was another large enterprise fueled by government contracts. The company built awning windows for distribution to military bases in every theater of war. The H.A.K. Corporation (the name represents the initials of the last names of the partners in the business), located near the Seaboard Airline Railroad tracks and Davie Boulevard, produced more than 1.6 million shells of the thirty-seven and fifty millimeter varieties. Allied forces employed hundreds of thousands of shells produced by the H.A.K. Corporation in the African campaign in 1942-1943. The shells reached their targets in circuitous fashion. Each day, airplanes ferried the company's output to Ohio; from there it was carried abroad.³¹

The Rex Bassett Plant employed 175 persons, mainly women, in the creation of two-way radios, quartz crystals, and a wide variety of electronic equipment. For part of the war, the Goodwin Awning Company worked under a large government contract providing for the construction of 250,000 pup tents. Other smaller plants and businesses in Fort Lauderdale also produced a variety of war goods.³²

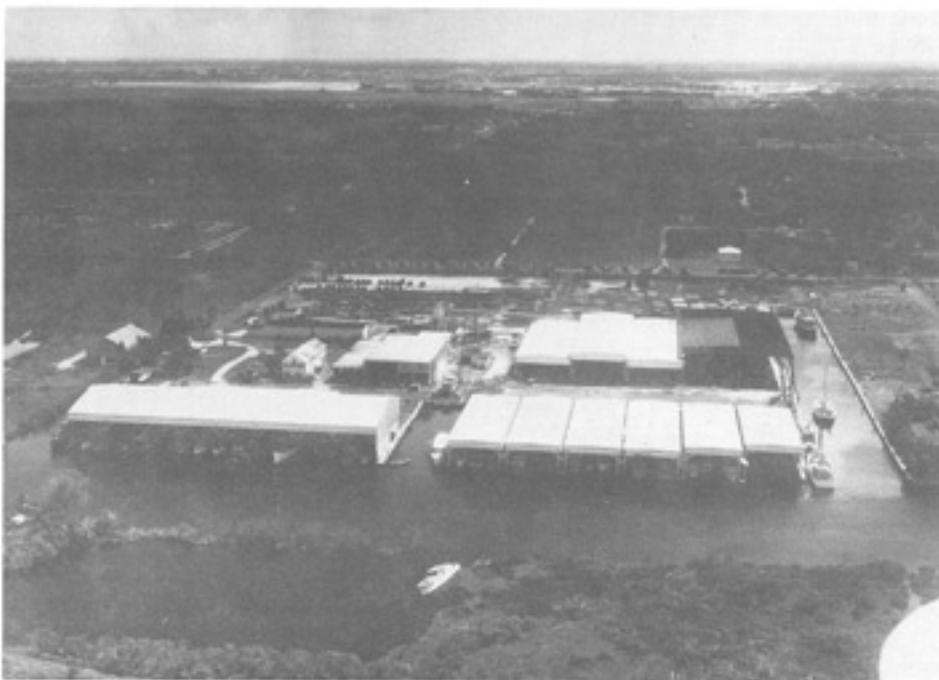
Not to be overlooked in terms of Broward County's material contribution to the Allied war cause was its agricultural output. Large farms, especially in the Middle River region, yielded rich harvests of beans, tomatoes, and even oranges for marmalade, all of which were shipped north by rail.³³

Local industries were plagued by labor shortages, especially of male workers, since the draft board took many of them. Accordingly, many women took jobs unfamiliar to them. Other women served as volunteers. "Gray ladies," so named because of the color of their attire, substituted for nurses who were in short supply. Many Fort Lauderdale women assisted the American Red Cross as volunteer drivers, as part of the process of transporting disabled soldiers to a hospital or home.³⁴

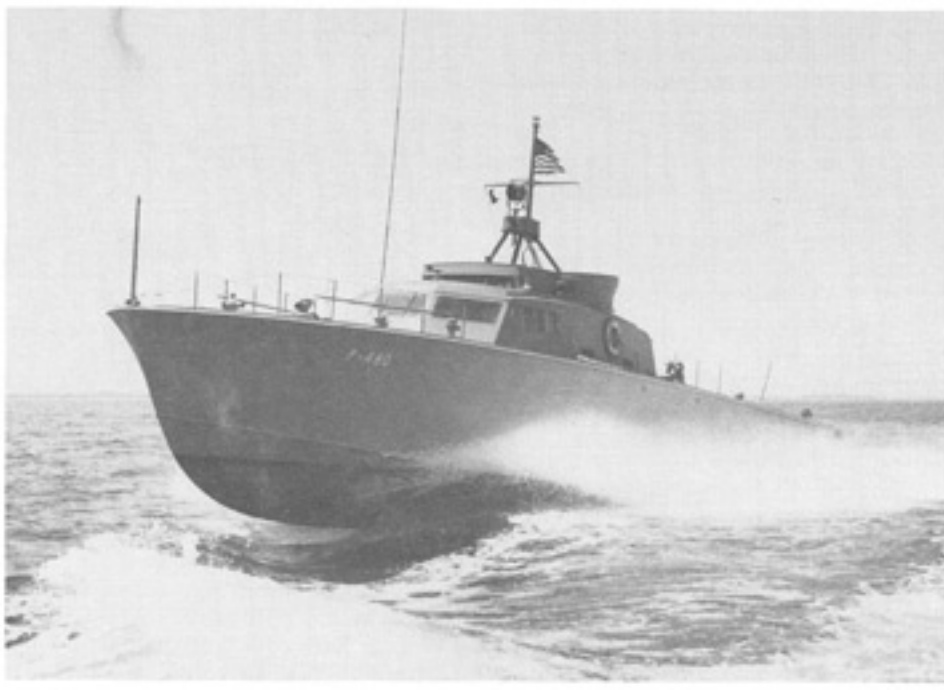
The hundreds of thousands of servicemen who trained in the area had an enormous impact on Fort Lauderdale.

The slowdown in tourism was more than compensated for by the influx of soldiers who occupied many empty tourist facilities. When military officials informed the city of an impending influx of thousands of United States Navy trainees in 1942, the Fort Lauderdale Chamber of Commerce created a Military Affairs Council. Comprised of Fort Lauderdale's leading citizens, the council provided

for the opening of the Fort Lauderdale Service Men's Center in October 1942. The center served not only soldiers in Fort Lauderdale, but also many thousands of other members of the armed forces stationed throughout Broward County and surrounding areas of southeast Florida. Robert Gore provided his Pioneer Department Store building at Las Olas Boulevard and Southeast First Avenue rent free to the



Dooley's Yacht Basin and Dry Dock (above) on the south fork of New River was Fort Lauderdale's largest war contractor and produced a number of military vessels, including the army aircraft rescue vessel pictured below.



council, which constructed a dance floor, library, large dining room, and lunch counter across 10,000 feet of unpartitioned floor space. An honor roll of the 5,536 Broward Countians serving in the armed forces during the war graced the front of the center. In its new incarnation, the facility became known as the "most beautiful service center in the United States."³⁵

The Fort Lauderdale Service Men's Center offered a daily fare of activities and benefits, ranging from mathematics and dance classes to mending and altering "freshly laundered clothes."³⁶ Hundreds of volunteer women staffed the center, serving as hostesses daily and dance partners on Saturday nights. Weekly dances drew as many as 3,000 servicemen. According to August Burghard, secretary of the Fort Lauderdale Chamber of Commerce, two to three million men and women of the armed forces used the facility, described as the "busiest and happiest place in [wartime] South Florida," during its three years of operation.³⁷

From 4:00 p.m. till curfew, members of the armed forces filled the sidewalks, bars, restaurants, and movie theaters of downtown Fort Lauderdale. In this milieu, downtown bars "reaped a vast harvest, being crammed from opening to closing."³⁸ The Deck, a bistro that stood on the north bank of New River just east of the Andrews Avenue bridge, was especially popular with servicemen.³⁹

Another side of civilian life in wartime Fort Lauderdale was represented by government restrictions and bureaucracy. With thousands of military personnel flocking to Fort Lauderdale in 1942, the federal government quickly closed the area's bordellos. The city imposed early closing hours in bars where formerly there were none. The War Price and Rationing Board issued War Ration books out of city

hall. Authorities enthusiastically enforced a rigid midnight curfew. Gambling continued, but on a much more modest scale. Many of the more elaborate clubs closed while several bookies and a few downtown joints continued to operate. Automobile driving was limited by the rationing of tires and gasoline. Fort Lauderdale businessman Moe Katz remembered the restrictions, especially those governing gasoline and rubber (tire) rationing. "Herbert McCann (Mayor of Fort Lauderdale from 1941-1942) was finally selected by the president and put in charge of tire rationing. You could not get any tires unless you got them through his office in Jacksonville," Katz noted, and, "You couldn't get gasoline without going to the city hall. You couldn't even get an automobile for the love of money."⁴⁰ Sometimes, gasoline stations expended their fuel allotments before the month was up, resulting in a dry spell for several days. This prospect threatened to place a damper over Christmas activities in 1943, causing the *Fort Lauderdale Daily News and Evening Sentinel* to observe, on December 21, that "By nightfall, the county as well as Fort Lauderdale and other cities will be without gasoline for any but the most essential driving."⁴¹ With easier access to fuel, the municipal bus system operated at capacity while maintaining a regular schedule.⁴²

The city's police, who were expected

to assist their military counterparts, in addition to dispatching their own responsibilities, were hampered by personnel shortages. Twenty-five or thirty local policemen were called on to police 3,000 servicemen on occasion. Compounding the difficulties of the understaffed police were occasional pranks by servicemen. In one instance, enrollees in the naval training school at the Tradewinds Hotel, playful after spending several hours in downtown night spots, decided to make East Las Olas Boulevard impassable to automobiles on their return to the hotel. Accordingly, they collected garbage cans, flower pots, lawn chairs, and other available objects from the residences along their homebound route, and scattered them along the streets. When their military superiors learned of the prank, the entire student body was forced to replace every item used to trash Las Olas Boulevard.⁴³

The Tradewinds was but one of many hotels and housing facilities that accommodated members of the armed forces. The United States Navy took over seventeen cottages in nearby Mooney Point for servicemen and their families. Several downtown hotels and apartments housed soldiers. The New River Inn was especially popular for visiting servicemen from surrounding areas. For their part, denizens of private homes and even tourist facilities welcomed soldiers as their guests for holiday meals.⁴⁴



Wartime postcard showing the Fort Lauderdale Service Men's Center, one of the city's most popular locations.



Interior view of the Service Men's Center, showing visiting servicemen and volunteer hostesses (photo courtesy of Fort Lauderdale Historical Society).

Military personnel in Fort Lauderdale had, in effect, become the "new" tourists; their presence, along with the military facilities and installations in the area, provided employment for many residents of Fort Lauderdale. Servicemen's relatives and friends who visited Fort Lauderdale, as well as some tourists who continued to visit, enabled the city to maintain a "sketchy sort of tourist economy throughout the war."⁴⁵ Fort Lauderdale, in fact, continued to promote tourism, seemingly oblivious at times to the extraordinary situation of which it was a part. As late as 1943, Mayor N.B. Cheaney averred that Fort Lauderdale was "definitely not taken over by the services."⁴⁶ Moreover, "Our beach is as free as ever for your use during all daylight hours."⁴⁷ In the same year, the city announced that the tourist season had been extended to May 1, because of the "unabated demand for accommodations in April."⁴⁸ Newspapers in many parts of the nation carried this information.⁴⁹

Some elements of wartime Fort Lauderdale differed little from peacetime in their operations. Schools maintained a regular schedule, as did the churches, which also remembered the armed forces in their services. Service clubs continued to meet, but their community-uplift projects centered on war-supported activities.⁵⁰

The dark months of 1942 and early 1943 were followed by outbursts of joy and displays of patriotism such as that surrounding the long-awaited Allied invasion of Hitler's Fortress Europe on D-Day, June 6, 1944. The *Fort Lauderdale Daily News and Evening Sentinel* reported on D-Day that "from the early hours of this morning throughout the entire day radios in the business district and throughout the residential sections were blaring as they probably never blared before. Many persons who heard the news early hurried to the telephone and called their neighbors ... many breakfasts grew cold as all of Fort Lauderdale listened tensely to 'ringside' reports of the progress of the attack."⁵¹ On the evening of June 6, 1944, Fort Lauderdale's churches held special prayer services.⁵²

Fort Lauderdale and Broward County's financial support of the war effort consistently exceeded the goals established for them. In October 1943, Broward County raised \$600,000 beyond its quota of \$2,000,000 in the Third War Bond drive. New loan drives were accompanied by parades and other enthusiastic displays of support. The business community was especially supportive of these campaigns. Soon after D-Day, the Broward Bank and Trust Company placed an advertisement in the *Fort Lauderdale News and Evening Sentinel* for the "Fifth War



This booklet, prepared by order of the Florida Legislature, was one of a series of state and local publications issued during the war to encourage tourism, agriculture, industry, and new residents.

INVASION BEGINS

EXTRA! FORT LAUDERDALE DAILY NEWS EXTRA!

1944 THE BROWARD COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

AND EVENING SENTINEL

MEMBER THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

33rd YEAR: NO. 229.

FORT LAUDERDALE, FLORIDA, TUESDAY, JUNE 6, 1944

PRICE: FIVE CENTS

ALLIES LAND IN FRANCE

Nazis Flash First Word Of Invasion

LONDON, Tuesday, June 6, (AP)—Three German news agencies tonight flashed word to the world that an Allied invasion of western France had begun with Allied par-

INVASION!



Eisenhower In Command Of Assault

BULLETIN!

SUPREME HEADQUARTERS, Allied Expeditionary Force, June 6, (AP)—Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower's leadership...



Coast Guardsmen march down Andrews Avenue in the October 1944 Navy Day parade (photo courtesy of R. L. Landers).

Loan" campaign. The advertisement exhorted the community to "Buy Bonds — Back the Attack!"⁵³ Many retail outlets included in their advertising copy a fervent request to support the American Red Cross in its war-relief activities. The community also supported scrap metal and paper drives with enthusiasm, while it stolidly endured the disappearance, "for the duration (of the war)," of nylon stockings, lipstick, and sliced bread.

In a fashion similar to communities throughout the United States, Fort Lauderdale received the news of the death of President Franklin D. Roosevelt on April 12, 1945, with "stunned silence."⁵⁵ Roosevelt's lengthy, visible, and highly personal presidency and his wartime role as commander-in-chief had elevated him to the status of an icon among the American people. An accomplished sailor and fisherman, Roosevelt had visited Fort Lauderdale on several occasions, beginning in the 1920s. His last visit came in 1941. In the aftermath of his death, "people stood on avenues in small groups [in the downtown section] and talked quietly about the tragedy, many of them still unable to believe the Commander-in-Chief had died."⁵⁶

Three weeks after Roosevelt's death, World War II ended victoriously for the United States and her allies in Europe. The Fort Lauderdale Police Department greeted the news of VE Day (Victory in Europe) by unleashing a siren that emitted four lusty blasts. "Beyond that victory signal," *The Fort Lauderdale Daily News and Evening Sentinel* noted, "there was little expression of jubilation anywhere in the city as the joy was tempered by prayerful

thanksgiving in the hearts of the citizens."⁵⁷ VE Day also meant the immediate end of the brownout (a partial nightly blackout of the city); closing of bars and liquor stores for twenty-four hours; and church services at 8:00 p.m. In the aftermath of VE Day, the city remained an armed camp, as the war in the Pacific continued amid fears that a reeling Japan would fight to the last soldier.⁵⁸

However, the sudden end of the war in mid-August 1945, following the destruction of the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki by American atomic bombs, unleashed an orgy of celebration in downtown Fort Lauderdale and elsewhere in the city.

The *Fort Lauderdale Daily News and Evening Sentinel* pronounced the "City a Bedlam as Happy Crowds Celebrate Victory over Nipponese."⁵⁹ Citizens jammed into the downtown sector, with the largest segment gathered at the intersection of Las Olas Boulevard and South Andrews Avenue, for "the most outstanding celebration in the history of the city." The VJ (Victory Japan) celebration drew "almost every automobile within a radius of ten miles of the city ... into the downtown area," and vehicles which had been stored in garages since shortly after the war began, appeared miraculously on the streets.⁶⁰

Soon "hundreds of people swarmed behind flags, torches, and a hastily assembled American Legion Band to march through the business section of the city for hours before they staggered homeward completely exhausted."⁶¹ Apparently oblivious to the commotion was a woman sitting on a bus bench at South Andrews Avenue and Northwest River Drive, "calmly reading a book."⁶²

The VJ celebration at Port Everglades was even noisier than its downtown counterpart because ship personnel had tied down the whistles of every ship in the harbor so that their shrill screeching continued unabated for hours. Some ships' crews also fired volleys of pistol shells in the air⁶³. The city's raucous celebration was well earned, for Fort Lauderdale, unlike most American cities, had experienced World War II at first hand, from the frightening submarine warfare off of its coastline to its role as host to numerous military training facilities and programs.



Unloading metal collected in a scrap drive into freight cars at Port Everglades.

Footnotes

1. *Fort Lauderdale Daily News and Evening Sentinel*, August 19, 1941, 1; *Miami Herald* (Broward Edition), September 16, 1973, 3C; N.A., "Fort Lauderdale During World War II," *New River News*, 20 (Summer 1981), 3 (hereafter cited as "World War II").
2. *Orlando Sentinel Magazine*, July 23, 1972; N.A., "Fort Lauderdale Fifty Years Ago," *Broward Legacy*, 9 (Summer/Fall 1986), 27; *Historic Properties Associates, Architectural and Historical Survey of Fort Lauderdale: Original Town Limits* (St. Augustine, 1985), 14; M.A. Hottel, *Gold Coast Pioneer* (New York, 1953), 242; August Burghard and Philip Weidling, *Checkeder Sunshine* (Gainesville, 1966), 188.
3. Dorothea Lofstedt, "The Fort Lauderdale Police Department," *New River News*, 8 (July 31, 1969); *Fort Lauderdale News and Sun Sentinel*, May 8, 1950. Fort Lauderdale's population soared to 36, 328 by decade's end, a remarkable increase of more than one hundred percent over the figure for 1940.
4. Lofstedt, "Police Department," 10.
5. *Miami Herald* (Broward Edition), August 20, 1972, 3C; Burghard and Weidling, *Checkeder Sunshine*, 203.
6. *Fort Lauderdale Daily News and Evening Sentinel*, December 8, 1941, 1; Burghard and Weidling, *Checkeder Sunshine*, 205.
7. *Fort Lauderdale Daily News and Evening Sentinel*, December 8, 1941, 1.
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Ibid.*, December 8, 1941, 2; December 9, 1941, 10.
10. *Miami Herald* (Broward Edition), February 1, 1962, 2B; January 6, 1986, 1C; Jack T. Nelson, "Thirty Years On Mooney Point," *New River News*, 6 (January 31, 1968), 5; *Hallandale Digest*, February 24, 1983, 1B.
11. *Fort Lauderdale Daily News and Evening Sentinel*, December 8, 1941, 1-2; "World War II," 3.
12. Interview with Dr. Cooper Kirk, Broward County Historian, by Paul S. George, May 23, 1989, Fort Lauderdale.
13. "World War II," 3-4.
14. Burghard and Weidling, *Checkeder Sunshine*, 208-209.
15. "World War II," 7.
16. *Fort Lauderdale News and Sun Sentinel*, September 24, 1961.
17. *Miami Herald* (Broward Edition), September 16, 1973, 4B; *Miami Herald*, December 26, 1977, 1D; "World War II," 3; Leon O. Prior, "Nazi Invasion of Florida!" *Florida Historical Quarterly*, 49 (October 1970), 129-139; *Historic Properties, Survey*, 15.
18. Burghard and Weidling, *Checkeder Sunshine*, 224-225.
19. *Fort Lauderdale News and Sun Sentinel*, March 20, 1970; "World War II," 5; Burghard and Weidling, *Checkeder Sunshine*, 210.
20. *Fort Lauderdale News and Sun Sentinel*, March 20, 1970; "World War II," 5; Burghard and Weidling, *Checkeder Sunshine*, 210.
21. "World War II," 6, 10; *Hallandale Digest*, February 24, 1983, 1B; Burghard and Weidling, *Checkeder Sunshine*, 196, 271, 219-220, 223.
22. *Hallandale Digest*, February 24, 1983, 1B.
23. "World War II," 3-10; "Naval Air Station, Fort Lauderdale, Florida," Unpublished manuscript in the archives of the Broward County Historical Commission, 1-4; Burghard and Weidling, *Checkeder Sunshine*, 210-213.
24. *Fort Lauderdale Daily News and Evening Sentinel*, March 20, 1945, 9; *Fort Lauderdale Sun Sentinel*, June 30, 1989, 1, 4B; N.A., "Reminiscences of a Fort Lauderdale Navy Pilot," found in the file folder, "Wars and Military, World War II, Miscellaneous Pamphlets," Fort Lauderdale Historical Society; "World War II," 3-10; "Naval Air Station, Fort Lauderdale, Florida," 1-4; Burghard and Weidling, *Checkeder Sunshine*, 212-213.
25. "World War II," 7.
26. *Ibid.*
27. *Fort Lauderdale Sun Sentinel*, September 24, 1989, 1B.
28. Bill McGoun, "A History of Broward County," *Broward Legacy*, 2 (September 1978), 21; N.A., "Precis of Paper on Naval Radar and Range Finding School," found in file folder, "Wars and Military, World War II, Miscellaneous Pamphlets," Fort Lauderdale Historical Society; Burghard and Weidling, *Checkeder Sunshine*, 214.
29. "World War II," 6-7.
30. *Ibid.*, 8-9; Burghard and Weidling, *Checkeder Sunshine*, 214-217.
31. Burghard and Weidling, *Checkeder Sunshine*, 215-216.
32. *Ibid.*; "World War II," 8-9.
33. "World War II," 8-9.
34. Burghard and Weidling, *Checkeder Sunshine*, 216-217.
35. Letter from Peter P. Pierce, Jr., Lt. Colonel, QMC, Assistant Operations Officer, United States Selective Service System, to August Burghard, November 5, 1963, found in unnamed scrapbook on World War II, at the Fort Lauderdale Historical Society; "World War II," 9; Interview with Dr. Cooper Kirk, May 23, 1989; *Fort Lauderdale Daily News and Evening Sentinel*, April 13, 1944, 3; Burghard and Weidling, *Checkeder Sunshine*, 212; Postcard bearing the image of Fort Lauderdale's Service Men's Center, found in unnamed scrapbook on World War II, Fort Lauderdale Historical Society.
36. *Armaments* (Weekly newspaper of the Fort Lauderdale Service Men's Center), March 28-April 4, 1943.
37. *Fort Lauderdale Daily News and Evening Sentinel*, March 20, 1943; "World War II," 9; Burghard and Weidling, *Checkeder Sunshine*, 212.
38. Burghard and Weidling, *Checkeder Sunshine*, 214.
39. "World War II," 8-9; Interview with Dr. Cooper Kirk, May 23, 1989.
40. "World War II," 8.
41. *Fort Lauderdale Daily News and Evening Sentinel*, December 21, 1943.
42. Interview with Dr. Cooper Kirk, May 23, 1989.
43. Lofstedt, "Police Department," 6-7.
44. *Fort Lauderdale Daily News and Evening Sentinel*, December 21, 1943, 2; Florence C. Hardy, "The Bryan Family: Bryan Hotel, New River Hotel, New River Inn," *New River News*, 9 (July 31, 1971), 10; Nelson, "Thirty Years," 6; Burghard and Weidling, *Checkeder Sunshine*, 215.
45. Burghard and Weidling, *Checkeder Sunshine*, 221.
46. *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, November 29, 1943, N.P., found in unnamed scrapbook on World War II, Fort Lauderdale Historical Society.
47. *Ibid.*
48. *Detroit News*, March 28, 1943, n.p., found in unnamed scrapbook on World War II, Fort Lauderdale Historical Society.
49. See clippings of articles in the *Christian Science Monitor* (for December 12, 1942), *Birmingham News* (undated), and other newspapers in aforementioned scrapbook.
50. "World War II," 3-5.
51. *Fort Lauderdale Daily News and Evening Sentinel*, June 6, 1944, 1.
52. *Ibid.*, June 7, 1944, 1.
53. *Ibid.*, October 2, 1943, 1, 7; October 5, 1943, 1; June 13, 1944.
54. *Ibid.*, March 18, 1945, 7; March 22, 1945, 7; *Miami Herald*, April 2, 1969.
55. *Fort Lauderdale Daily News and Evening Sentinel*, April 13, 1945, 1.
56. *Ibid.*, April 13, 1945, 1; Burghard and Weidling, *Checkeder Sunshine*, 198. Roosevelt's final visit came in March 1941. On March 29, the President broadcast the last of his Jackson Day speeches. Roosevelt informed a large radio audience that he was "sitting in the little cabin of the little ship *Potomac*, in the harbor of Fort Lauderdale ... after a day of sunshine out in the Gulf Stream."
57. *Fort Lauderdale Daily News and Evening Sentinel*, May 8, 1945, 1.
58. *Ibid.*; *Hallandale Digest*, February 24, 1983, 1B.
59. *Fort Lauderdale Daily News and Evening Sentinel*, August 15, 1945, 1.
60. *Ibid.*
61. *Ibid.*
62. *Ibid.*
63. *Ibid.*

