

Beware the Haboob

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view from the hill

Tea Party Madness: A Race to the Bottom

By Mark Howell

Despite Historic Tours of America's difficulties in getting its Tea Party Museum going in Boston these days, the political Tea Party continues to gather more madness every day.

In their supposed insurgency against big government, the Tea Baggers' agenda is to push us all to the lower depths, crushed beneath corporate hegemony (average CEO annual income today: \$9 million) plus the largest "homeland security" bureaucracy ever seen in the history of the world, let alone proposed new laws to prevent pediatricians from counseling suicidal teens on the abuse of guns, or laws denying the right of women to deal with the rapine issues of men.

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in the news

How Many Inventors Does it Take to Screw in a Lightbulb?

By Jessica Argyle

How many inventors does it take to screw in a lightbulb?

Answer: One — Thomas E. Murray, because he invented the socket.

Last week the National Inventors Hall of Fame finally inducted Murray into their hallowed halls.

A short while ago, Key West resident Sean MacGuire, a great-great-

grandson of Thomas Murray and himself the holder of 10 patents pending, decided to find out just who his ancestor was.

The easy way — he googled him.

Sean MacGuire grew up in the 1970s surrounded by whispers and rumors of Murray, the man behind the long-ago squandered

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IN THE NEWS

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family fortune, the genius whose patents were in the hundreds, patents reputed to number slightly fewer than Edison's but more than Tesla's. He was among the first to settle Southampton and singlehandedly designed Manhattan's largest power stations.

So Sean stared at the computer screen and waited for information to appear that would reveal the truth about his ancestor.

But nothing happened. So on to Wikipedia.

Sandwiched between a Scottish curler and a Canadian Politician, T.E. Murray finally emerged. But it turned out the entry was for Tom Murray, Jr., son of T.E. and a member of the newly minted atomic energy commission in the 1950s.

In the end, Sean had to create the Wikipedia entry himself.

When T.E. Murray died in 1929, his estate was valued at between \$3 and \$10 million, depending upon whose account you went by. Predictably, the IRS said 10 while family members and lawyers claimed three. Disputed information in fact makes up much of the Murray saga. It was almost impossible to separate fact from fiction.

Over time, stories of Murray's contemporaries became ever more vibrant while his fell by the wayside. Murray's story was an Irish classic: the rags to riches tale of a 9-year-old lamplighter sent to work to support his large family upon his father's untimely death. With less than a grade-school education, Murray's inventive genius and business acumen garnered him great wealth in his lifetime. He even

managed to retain a strong social conscience — he created one of the first anti-pollution devices and gave generously to charity. He faithfully loved his wife, his mother and all of his eight children. But maybe happy families make dull reading.

Sparse material on the patriarch contrasts sharply with the wealth of reading on the second and third generations. In the 1970s, two books were written on the antics of the clans he spawned. "Real Lace, America's Irish Rich" by Stephen Birmingham and "The Golden Clan: The Murrays, the McDonnells & the Irish Aristocracy" by John Corry covered some of the public fascination, exemplified by the snapshot picture of Murray's granddaughter, Mary Jane Cuddihy, dancing barefoot at the El Morocco in 1940s New York City.

This notorious image went around the world, even making its way to Russia. Ironically enough, it was used as propaganda to show that Americans were so poor they couldn't afford shoes. By this time the Murrays were far more famous for their mansions, parties, lavish marriages with Vanderbilts and Fords, and finally, car crashes, hidden illegitimate children and, always, the Irish shadow of alcoholism. It wasn't until the money was gone and the mansions sold that the family took stock of what remained of its great fortune. By the fourth generation only whispers of the legend remained.

Some time in 2007, Sean MacGuire discovered a thesis written in the 1980s by a Tim Murray and submitted to Williams College for a B.A. in History, yet he remained confused as to what Murray had actually invented. How many patents did he hold? Who was



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

The Murray, MacGuire and Cuddihy families at the induction of Thomas E. Murray into the National Inventors Hall of Fame in Washington, D.C., this month. Fourth from left is Sean MacGuire. Holding the citation is his wife Nancy Jessica Argyle.

he really?

Sean then sought out his first cousin, H. Lester Cuddihy III, repository of all facts great and small, who only whetted his appetite further by suggesting that Murray's patents numbered slightly fewer than the great Edison himself.

Tom Murray's 2007 attempt to get Murray inducted into the Inventors Hall of Fame had apparently been rejected. A member of the committee that considers candidates each year, based in Akron, Ohio, denied him on the grounds that, "to get someone so little known and underappreciated into the Hall of Fame, you'll have to present a very strong case for him."

After exhausting the family's store of information, MacGuire set out on an old-fashioned journey to the reference library at the University of Vermont in Burlington and its dusty back room, one of only 80 patent and trademark depository libraries in the United States. These books hadn't been handled in ages. Volume after volume, page after yellowed page, yielded up their secrets in odd, often incomprehensible diagrams and information. Each page bearing

Murray's name was carefully photocopied.

Sean was astounded to discover what fine company his great-great-grandfather was in. Joe Cunningham, engineering historian and teacher who co-authored with Leonard De Hart a definitive three-volume "History of the New York City Subway System" in 1976 while still a college student, discovered that Murray not only created the business atmosphere that made it possible for the subway's station to be built but single-handedly developed techniques and apparatus without the kind of staff Edison had.

But even Joe Cunningham didn't know how many patents Murray held. The man was known to be publicity-shy, but why had Murray been so silent about his inventions compared with the publicity-seeking Edison?

One clue is that Edison improved upon inventions, such as the light bulb, rather than created them. Murray's work took place behind the scenes, getting legislation passed quietly, developing the infrastructure that vested interests rallied against. And Murray's inventions cannot

be easily understood; they were often unwieldy and not at all "sexy."

Slowly it emerged that T.E. Murray, while a young engineer with the Albany Waterworks, was taken under the wing of a man called Brady, a traction magnate and owner of Albany Electric Illuminating Company, a self-made man who must have recognized his own ilk when he spotted Murray. Brady had a genius for handling politicians, brokering deals and making a lot of money. Information on his life is scant because it was always wise to lay low due to the controversial nature of the work involved; changing over entire systems was certain to upset many vested interests even as the compliance of people in high governmental positions was essential to their success. Keeping information under wraps seems to have worked well because Brady, whose fortune is ranked as number 60 in the top 100 richest Americans, is hardly a household name.

But after all is said and done, it is the inventions and the patents that retain value. When Sean developed the T.E. Murray website to give the Hall of Fame people a place to check information, family members began to look to him as the authority. "How many patents are there, actually?" asked his sister Mary Jane MacGuire. "About 462," MacGuire was able to answer. "But who's counting?"

Someone was counting. At last the National Inventors Hall of Fame could no longer ignore Murray's achievements and Sean's efforts to have him honored.

Two weeks ago, Key West resident Sean MacGuire saw his wish come true. He made his way to

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Reef Relief's Coral Camp Begins on June 13

By Rudy Bonn

The first class for Coral Camp begins Monday, June 13 and weekly sessions will run through August 19; note that camp will not be held during the week of July 4.

This summer, the Camp program for six- through 12-year-old ocean explorers will teach about the plankton community. Kids will be able to take a look at members of this important community through a microscope equipped with a projector for enhancing the images.

A shark and a bony fish will be dissected and the differences between these two members of the coral reef ecosystem will be discussed.

Coral growth and reproduction is also included this year, with a hands-on activity to demonstrate reproduction in corals. How young corals find a suitable place to settle and begin growing, eventually forming a coral reef, will be explained.



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Climate change and its effects on coral reefs will be discussed, as will ocean acidification and its effects on coral reef ecosystems.

There are visits to the Key West Aquarium, the Butterfly Conservatory, the Eco-Discovery Center and the Wildlife Center, also a discovery walk along the beach where dune vegetation and the importance of sea grass and mangrove communities will be discussed.

There is also a visit to Fort Zachary Taylor State Park for snorkel school before

the coral campers are taken out to the reef to snorkel on the actual reef tract itself. Last year, the campers saw sharks, turtles, manta rays, sting rays, lion fish and all sorts of other fishes along with the corals and invertebrates like comb jellies and moon jellies.

Each session runs for one week, from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Cost of one week-long session is \$215 per child, or \$370 for two weeks. Scholarships are available on a limited basis; call the center at 294-3100 or email reefrelief@gmail.com for

more information.

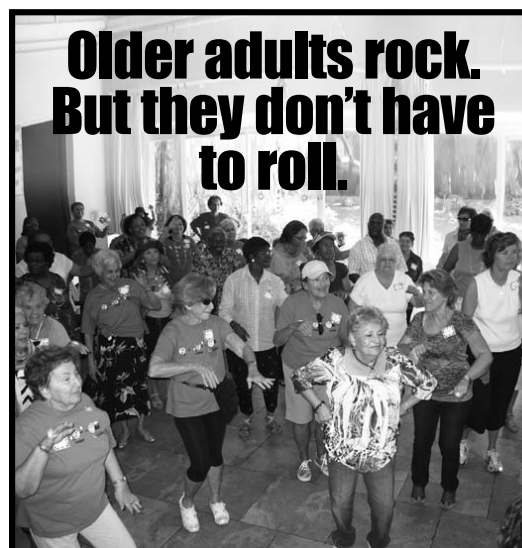
Sessions are limited to 20 kids.

Sponsors for Coral Camp 2011 include Sebago Watersports, Dive Key West, Danger Charters, Key West Aquarium, Eco-Discovery Center, Key West Butterfly & Nature Conservatory, Key West Wildlife Center, Isle Style Spa, Fury Water

Adventures, Glad Tidings Community Church, Fort Zachary Taylor State Park, Mama Flower, Dancing Dolphin Spirit Charters and Momentum Key West.

Get ready, coral campers! This summer is going to be the best one yet.

Rudy Bonn is the Director of Marine Projects at Reef Relief.



Older adults rock. But they don't have to roll.

IN THE NEWS

Continued from page 3

Washington, D.C., and dinner in the Portrait Gallery at the Smithsonian to accept and celebrate the induction of Thomas E. Murray to the 39th annual National Inventors Hall of Fame.

As he was struggling with his trademark bow tie, he stopped to check his email. Lo and behold, he received a message from his patent agent Michel Sofia announcing that Sean himself had been granted a patent that he'd been working on for the past six years.

"It's a gift from Murray," said Sean to his wife, teary eyed. "You can't make this stuff up."



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

From left are Thomas E. Murray, Thomas A. Edison and Walter P. Chrysler.

Health Foundation of South Florida celebrates Older Americans Month with a healthy aging opportunity...

Health Foundation's Healthy Aging Regional Collaborative enables community agencies to offer free and low cost programs that are proven to be effective in reducing the fear and risk of falling, increasing physical activity levels and managing chronic conditions.

Since 2008, more than 14,000 residents of Miami-Dade, Broward and Monroe Counties have participated in the Healthy Aging Regional Collaborative programs and put life back in their lives. Now, you can too.

Our active grantee, Florida Keys Area Health Education Center, offers the programs including a Diabetes Self-Management workshop beginning May 16. Call them at 305-743-7111 x 208 or visit www.healthyagingsf.org. Sign up for a class today.



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