CASA COASTER

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What's News

Neighborhood

★ **Six pickleball courts** will debut at the city's tennis center, catering to the fast-growing sport. **A8**

★ **Former leaders** of South Florida's largest HOA are in jail after allegedly siphoning millions and bullying homeowners with bogus fines. **A8**

Casa Costa

★ **Elevator failures** prompted the Board to hire consultants to oversee fixes. **A1**

★ **The club room** at the building is set to host a bingo night and a Super Bowl kickoff for residents. **A8**

INSIDE

SPOTLIGHTS
One lover and one pro at the heart of the community. **A6**

LETTERS
Thank you for calling out the elevator in the room. **A2**

Residents overflow at café



BELINDA BATTISTA

Marina Café hosted a happy hour organized by the Social & Welcoming Committee on Jan. 12 that nearly spilled into the harbor, as 50 residents enjoyed the warm weather and tapas like devils-on-horseback. The manager called in backup to help serve the thirsty crowd.

The millionaire next door

* * *

Six decades of mansions, celebrities and kings; a life "not particularly noteworthy"

By J.T. Harrington

OCEAN RIDGE, Fla. – There's no Hollywood film or tell-all book about Alvin Malnik, but there should be.

The slim attorney and businessman, who turns 90 this year, built the beaux-arts style mansion on Ocean Blvd. that stands out as Casa Costa residents gaze across the Intracoastal.

The site was originally the Boynton Beach Hotel, built in 1895 by Nathan Smith Boynton, a Civil War major and namesake for the city. According to the president of the local historical society, the 45-room hotel advertised "unsurpassed drinking water – a certain cure for kidney troubles" until it was destroyed by a hurricane in 1926.

In 1996, an anonymous buyer purchased the property for $2.5 million, three weeks after it was sold to a builder who planned two speculative

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Elevator upgrade in the works

On Jan. 25 the Board of Directors hired Clarkson + Varick, a New York-based elevator consultant, to oversee the modernization of the community's error-prone elevators.

C+V plans to solicit bids and supervise the work, which is expected to take more than a year. In 2012, the manufacturer discontinued the elevator model installed by Casa Costa's developers. They have repeatedly broken for 18 months. Modernization involves the replacement of key system components, such as the controller "brain," which the consultants recommend replacing with a non-proprietary version that technicians can more easily service.

* * *

The heat is on

The community's head engineer and the owner of Carpenter Electric salvaged boilers that had never been connected.

After an unusual cold snap on Christmas Day when some in-unit heaters didn't work, they realized that the mechanical system had never been fully assembled to keep the water warm enough to produce heat.

– Staff reports

OPINION

Cheers, jeers and tears

By Wolfgang Nitsch

The *Casa Coaster* – what a great idea, and so refreshing to be able to read something on paper as opposed to on the internet and social media.

Another plus it was actually delivered to our doors. However, as it may not be possible to slide under all doors, maybe we could think of installing a plastic envelope under the door numbers which would hold the future issues.

When I received the first issue, I read the items of immediate interest which dealt with neighborhood functions, programs and construction updates. Then we received an urgent email denying the Board's knowledge and approval of said issue. This piqued my interest and I reread the *Coaster* to find out what the objection was, as I had seen that Board members advertised and wrote articles.

Aaaaah! The letter of the forgotten renters and the falsities in the fact-and-fiction article. As to the renter feeling like a second-class citizen, I am sorry she feels this way. As an owner, I also occasionally feel that way with the petty rules, regulations and threats of fines. But I do somewhat sympathize with renters who want to get involved and are prohibited from meetings. One suggestion is if they receive authorization from their landlord to partake in the functions or better still if the renters paid the association fees in addition to their rent then we could allow them to partake.

Getting back to the rules and fines that have evolved since the original "do not do" book, maybe a future issue could publish a list of fines and rules.

Let me address the most amusing article that includes the "fact" that the concrete dust killed the plants on the fifth floor. Absolutely hilarious. Please inform the writer of the real fact: Lack of water killed the plants, as the only one sprinkler that worked last year from November to May was me carrying bucket after bucket filled from our bathtub.

I look forward to the next issue. A little more detail on construction scheduling would help us all understand timing and the patience required for all we have to endure.

Mr. Nitsch is a back-up golfer and persona non grata at the poker table in addition to moonlighting as a fact-checker.

LETTER TO THE PUBLISHER

Elevators are our top priority

Annie Blake does an excellent job of explaining why repairing or replacing the elevators in our building needs to be prioritized over adding amenities ("The elevator in the room," Jan. 2023).

It is probably the most expensive project we could undertake, but in terms of quality of life, it is essential. Best of luck to the Board as they investigate the options.

Elizabeth Pearce

A not-so-difficult correction



Greetings fellow Casa Coasters! We are the real estate office just outside of Casa Costa. I am also an owner here in the south tower. Many of us are familiar with the adage that real estate is local in nature. It is absolutely true! Fed Chair Jerome Powell talks about a "difficult correction" in housing. While those words may be difficult to hear, they may only loosely apply to the local real estate market.

Through my daily interaction with listings and buyers, I see that Florida waterfront condos prices are stabilizing. Prices had been escalating to unsustainable levels, but buyers were still buying. Today, buyers have stopped paying the sky-high prices that many sellers still expect. The good news is that we are still seeing buyers at a healthy pace. Buyers are much more aware of their purchasing power but your home will always be in demand if you price it right.

Andre Apicella

Mr. Apicella is a broker at Waterfront Homes & Condos in Boynton Beach.

Email submissions to casacoasternews@gmail.com.
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Call me Al: Mansion owner hosted celebs

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homes for the site. The mystery buyer paid a $500,000 premium over the closing price weeks earlier, the *Palm Beach Post* reported.

Rumors circulated that Oprah Winfrey was the new owner as a mansion measuring 21,000 square feet rose on the site and subcontractors claimed they had to sign confidentiality agreements, says a report in the *Chicago Tribune*.



Alvin Malnik

It was two years before the buyer revealed himself. Mr. Malnik, no stranger to celebrity and rumors himself, has been a South Florida fixture since he graduated from the University of Miami School of Law in 1959 after moving from St. Louis.

The mansion boasts 11 bedrooms, 18 ½ bathrooms, two elevators, a pool, hot tub and expansive pool deck facing the ocean. To build the deck and a bridge elevated over the dunes, builders obtained a special state permit. According to the *Palm Beach Post* in 1996, "commissioners decided to rewrite the land development code after plans for the mansion were submitted" to ban future "large glitzy homes on small lots."

"I consider myself not particularly noteworthy."

In 2006, Mr. Malkin purchased the five-bedroom home next door for $7.9 million. The family transformed it into a gallery for Asian art and children's playroom, according to realtors.

Palm Beach County appraisers value the combined property at $61 million. It spans nearly 3 ½ acres.

The *Casa Coaster* contacted the Malnik's office for details on the estate; a representative declined to comment.

A 2014 profile in *Haute Magazine* details the mansion's interior: "towering Botero sculptures, ivories and jades … elaborate wood carvings, solid marble columns and a collection of custom, one-of-a-kind and antique furnishings, which are attended by a sizable staff."

Alan Pearl, a swimming pool contractor in Boca Raton, wrote that he helped with construction and on a property tour, Mr. Malnik told him the black columns at the home's entrance are from the set of *Gone with the Wind*.

The larger Malnik real estate empire has comprised country clubs, shopping malls and condominiums in South Florida. He once owned thousands of apartments in California. In addition to the Ocean Ridge estate, he owns homes in California and Colorado.

His wife bought a 17-acre equestrian estate in Wellington two years ago, according to *The Real Deal*.

"I consider myself not particularly noteworthy," writes Mr. Malnik on one of at least nine websites such as AlMalnik.com that highlight his career, philanthropy and awards.

His biography highlights his wife Nancy, 52, and declares that the father of ten "is in fantastic shape thanks to his daily workouts" and that "Miami is a world-class city, in large part, because of him."

It continues: "He is a life in a movie, one that everyone is dying to watch."

South Florida star power

Fresh out of law school, Mr. Malnik obtained the rights to the Scopitone, a type of movie jukebox that was a forerunner of the music video. He says he sold his interest for $2 million, making him a young millionaire. The investment connected him to the "Rat Pack" and he forged friendships with Frank Sinatra and Dean Martin.

His Hollywood connections don't end there. Filmmaker Brett Ratner, whose works include *Rush Hour* and *Horrible Bosses*, considers Mr. Malnik a father figure. He said in a 2011 interview: "I consider my father to be Alvin Malnik. Al raised me … I feel like I'm part of the Malnik family."

It was Mr. Ratner who introduced Michael Jackson to the family. *Vanity Fair* writes that Mr. Ratner invited the King of Pop to the mansion "so beautiful it would make him catatonic." Mr. Jackson was a frequent houseguest in 2003 and 2004. Mr. Malnik later told *Haute Magazine* that he is godfather to



BOYNTON BEACH LIBRARY

The Boynton Beach Hotel on Ocean Drive, built in 1895, advertised its drinking water as "a certain cure for kidney troubles." It boasted 45 rooms and a shooting range.

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HOMES OF THE RICH

Solid marble columns adorn 6301 N. Ocean Blvd.

Continued from Page A4

Mr. Jackson's son Blanket, and that he served as a financial advisor to Mr. Jackson while the singer faced mounting debt. Mr. Malnik told the *New York Times* that in 2004, he agreed to be executor of Mr. Jackson's estate but had not been contacted following the King of Pop's death.

In the 1980s Mr. Malnik befriended the Saudi Royal Family, who considered him "an American sheik," *People* magazine wrote at the time. According to the reporting, the royals were impressed by his pedigree: "amateur pilot and architect and owned a helicopter." They said of Mr. Malnik, then 46, "All the boys were talking about this exciting new member of the group. He brought adventure into their lives … He even told them that he could get the police to work for them. They loved it." At one point, Mr. Malnik's son Mark changed his name to Shareef and married a Saudi princess.

Business and charity empire

Aside from real estate and the music jukebox, Mr. Malnik is famous for The Forge, a nightclub and steakhouse in Miami Beach that he acquired and remodeled in the late 1960s. The second-oldest restaurant in South Florida (Joe's Stone Crab three miles south is the oldest). The Forge was a well-known hangout for celebrities and mobsters until it closed three years ago. Last year, it was reported that the glitzy restaurant would reopen after being leased to a nightclub owner, but no date was set and it remains shuttered. Property records still link the restaurant to Mr. Malnik's address.

He is a major investor in Title Loans of America, an Atlanta-based company that offers high-interest loans using a consumer's vehicle as collateral.

No retrospective on Mr. Malnik is complete without wise guy allegations. The FBI first opened a dossier on him in 1963, according to records they released 29 years later. Federal and state regulators, such as the Pennsylvania Crime Commission in 1978, alleged that Mr. Malnik had ties to organized crime. Authorities alleged he was "heir apparent" to Meyer Lansky, known as the "Mob's accountant" who helped develop a worldwide gambling empire that the FBI believed to once be worth $768 million in today's dollars. Mr. Lansky is portrayed as Hyman Roth, the main protagonist in *The Godfather, Part II*, though the real-life version was never found guilty of any crimes beyond illegal gambling before his death in 1983. Meanwhile Mr. Malnik has never been convicted of a crime. In an interview with the *Palm Beach Post* two decades after a New Jersey casino commission accused him of colluding with gangsters, Mr. Malnik asked, "If there was any violation, why wasn't I brought to the bar of justice?"

"All the boys were talking about this exciting new member of the group."

Mr. Malnik's charity work is beyond dispute. After one of his sons was diagnosed with leukemia, he founded an oncology research fund. The family's most publicized philanthropy is through Miami's Make-a-Wish Foundation. Shareef Malnik has been gala chairman of the non-profit for 18 years and his father is a "Lifetime Benefactor." The foundation's most recent ball featured Diana Ross and raised a record $5.4 million, according to a press release. The Malnik family hosts Make-A-Wish donors at an annual garden party at the mansion.

"And," as one of his websites says, "the legacy continues."

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CASA COASTER SPOTLIGHT

Veronica serves at the heart of the community

By John Battista

When you walk through the lobby any weekday evening, Veronica Kubala is ready to greet you. Ms. Kubala joined the team in June 2021 as a front desk concierge. Castle Group promoted her to supervisor last month, tasking her with additional training responsibilities.

"There aren't enough adjectives to describe Veronica," said Marna Atkin, a longtime resident. "Professional, calm, capable. She is just a lovely person whom we are so lucky to have."

A native of Brooklyn, Ms. Kubala moved to South Florida 30 years ago, where she raised two children. Her son is now a forensic accountant in Pennsylvania while her daughter is a nurse that lives nearby. Ms. Kubala says her favorite activity in her free time is to spend time with her five grandchildren.

Finding free time is difficult, she says. Ms. Kubala has an additional full-time job at a local commercial kitchen contractor. "My primary job shift ends at 2 p.m. and I was looking for a way to connect with people," she said. "This opportunity to work at the desk came up, and the rest is history."

The concierge desk is "the heart of Casa Costa," where residents come with questions or concerns, Ms. Kubala said. "I want people to know that I am part of their team. When a resident suffers, I suffer. When they are frustrated with the elevator, I am frustrated with the elevator."

Ms. Kubala glanced up from our conversation. "Hello love, nice to see you back," she greeted a resident passing by.

She said she hopes a friendly face and kind words go a long way to make people comfortable living here.



JOHN BATTISTA

One mouse is never enough for Veronica, weekday afternoons and nights.

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CASA COASTER SPOTLIGHT

Bentley

By John Battista

A Golden Doodle born in Florida 3 ½ years ago, Bentley is one you may see several times a day walking around the pond. He is very friendly with both humans and other dogs, but when he sees a new dog, he gets excited by jumping and twisting – not to be aggressive, just until he gets to know the new dog.

His favorite thing to do is to play with his dog friend, Rosie. Rosie is his neighbor and they spend a great deal of time together and Bentley is always gentle with the much smaller Rosie. As his human, Mildred Klein, says: "Bentley is a lover."

Bentley won a ribbon at the First Annual Casa Costa Halloween Dog Parade for the most original costume, dressed as a UPS delivery dog. Bentley is just one example of the wonderful four-legged friends that are part of our community. So when you meet this award-winner, be sure to take it slow and gentle.



Bentley – "a lover"

For safety reasons, no pets are permitted in the fitness center, club room or on the pool deck.

Spotlight nomination? Email casacoasternews@gmail.com

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City to open six pickleball courts

The Boynton Beach Recreation and Parks Department announced the grand opening of six pickleball courts at its tennis center on S. Congress Ave.

City officials are hosting a ribbon-cutting ceremony at 10 a.m. on Feb. 4 with concessions and a clinic on the fast-growing sport. The courts are already open and free to use on a first-come, first-served basis till the ceremony.

Pickleball is a fusion of badminton, tennis and ping pong. The court is smaller and the nets shorter than for tennis, and players use paddles and wiffle balls.

Invented in 1965, pickleball is the fastest growing sport in America, with an estimated 36.5 million "picklers" in the U.S., according to the Association of Pickleball Professionals. The city has not yet announced the fees it will charge to play, but its tennis court fees range from $3 to $10 for residents.

* * *

The city announced that it has secured $1,025,000 in federal funding. Officials said they will use the money to repair a radio tower near Highway 95 and the Boynton Canal that is used for public safety communication but has undergone "extensive damage and deterioration."

– Staff reports

Former Board of South Florida's largest HOA jailed in $2M scheme

Outside Miami, four former board members and the husband of the ex-board president were arrested on charges of racketeering and grand theft.

The Hammocks is a community of 18,400 homeowners in south Miami-Dade County. Its former leaders are charged with siphoning roughly $2 million through phony vendor orders. At a court hearing last month, the appointed receiver said a new property manager and security firm were hired at the previously self-managed community – and suggested that beyond stealing dues, the accused used "henchmen" to intimidate homeowners and filed meritless lawsuits and fines to drive out those who raised concerns about mismanagement.

"This is going to be the big kahuna."

"This is going to be the big kahuna because if people were fraudulently foreclosed upon … members of the prior board could have been buying these properties at auction," the judge said in a court transcript reported by *The Real Deal* last month.

The ex-board president faces a maximum 150-year prison sentence.

– Staff reports

Local events

BINGO NIGHT
Feb. 2 @ 6 p.m.
Club Room | $10
Never say the caller's name in vain

FIRST FRIDAYS @ 5
Feb. 3 @ 5 - 8 p.m.
Centennial Park | Free
Reggae-rock fusion music with food trucks

SUPER BOWL TAILGATE
Feb. 12 @ 4 p.m.
Club Room | $10
Pizza and a chance to win $800

OCEANFRONT BARK "PAW-TY"
Feb. 18 @ 9 a.m.
6415 N Ocean | Free
Dogs permitted off leash on the beach during event

ROCK THE PLAZA AT ONE BOYNTON
Feb. 28 @ 5 - 8 p.m.
1351 S. Fed Hwy | Free
Music from Reggae Souljahs

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Boynton Beach, Fla.

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