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The Florida Buccaneers is a Chapter of the Special Military Active Recreational Travelers Club (SMART)

May 2025

## CHAPTER VICE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

JOE FAUBION

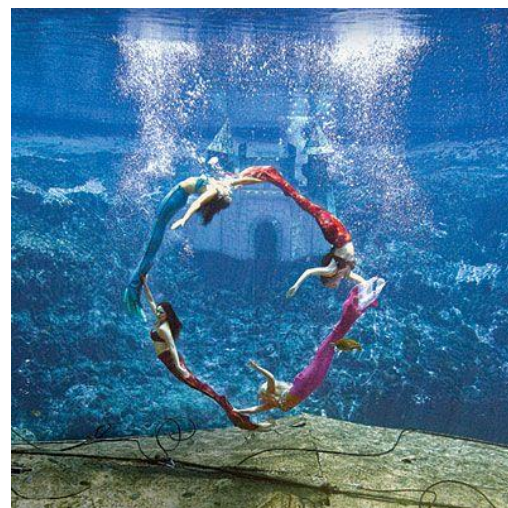
Greetings Buccaneers and Happy Mother's Day!

I apologize for the length of this VP Message, there is much to cover as we just completed our Spring Muster which included an awesome pre-muster - thank you John and Kathy Steinbauer for organizing. We visited two wonderful State Parks - Ellie Schiller Homosassa Springs Wildlife and Weeki Wachee Springs (home of the mermaids!). This was our first time visiting these parks and both are on our list for return visits. If you are ever in the area, we would recommend checking out El Mezcal Mexican Restaurant - twice a month they have a Mariachi Band, and we lucked out!

Ellie Schiller Homosassa Springs Wildlife State Park includes



paved trails for wildlife viewing. The walk consists of elevated boardwalks that are accessible for visitors in wheelchairs or with strollers. The tree-lined boardwalk allowed an elevated view into the natural habitats and provided welcome shade from the sun along the way. They also had well positioned restrooms and benches for breaks. Most of the wildlife is native to Florida but they do have an African Hippo named Lu. Lu was declared an honorary citizen of the state of Florida in 1989 allowing him to remain at the State Park and today is the oldest known living African Hippo at 65 years young! All the wildlife is well cared for and occasionally a non-resident creature may stop by - like the large Pleated Redheaded Woodpecker who kindly posed for a picture.



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Shortly after COVID we tried to visit the world famous Wicki Wachee mermaids, but they weren't performing yet, so we were pleased to be able to see them on this trip. They put on a fantastic show which is included in the park entry fee. The State Park includes access to Buccaneer Bay - a large water park (included in the entry fee) that is clearly a popular draw for locals and reaches max capacity early on weekends.



All too soon our time in Homosassa came to an end and we made our way to Ocala for the start of our Spring Muster. Champions Run, Ocala, FL, is a new, well-designed campground with some beautiful amenities. Parking spots are level, large and concrete. While we didn't have a dedicated meeting area for our muster, we made do and there weren't many folks at the campground this time of year. We were also allowed use of the Tiki Hut bar area when the bar wasn't open. We began the muster with a heavy hors d'oeuvres and welcomed our guests - Aaron and Judy Ross - two Air Force veterans we met at the campground and joined SMART and the Buccaneers by the end of the muster. Also, we were honored to introduce Gail and Lonnie Alley, East Region Director, who were kind enough to visit us. New members, Greg and Nancy Miller, were attending their first Buccaneer muster and we briefly had a chance to meet with them during the pre-muster as well.



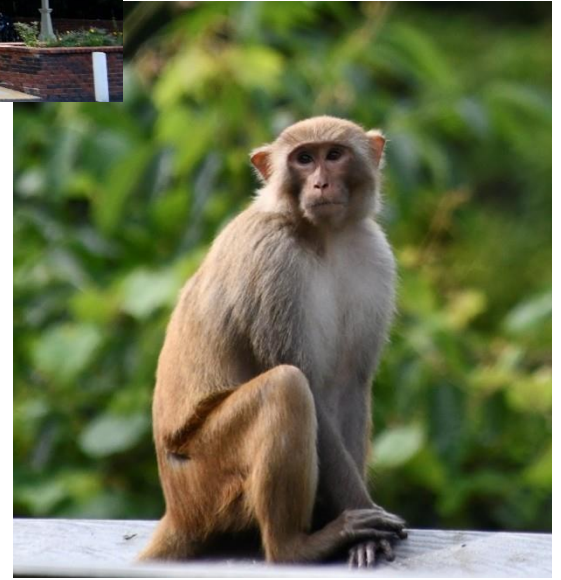




Several of us visited the Silver Springs State Park to enjoy the glass bottom boat tour. The local monkeys were playing near the entrance of the park and a couple of them posed for pictures.



Steve and Rita Bourque hosted a happy hour complete with bar, karaoke, and music trivia.



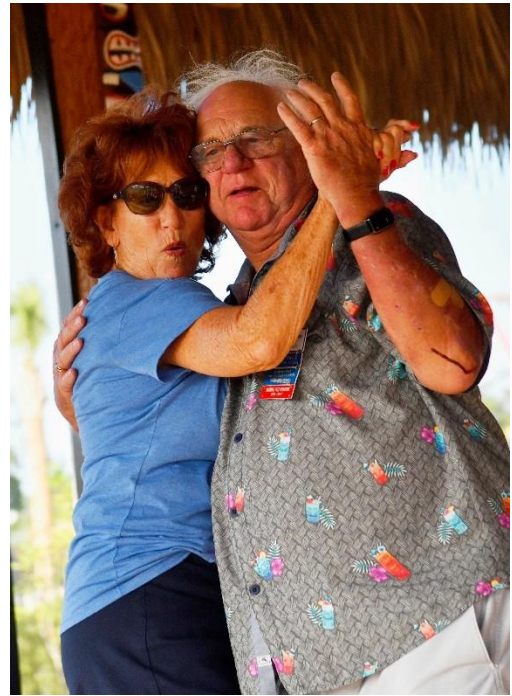
They started the evening with a humorous Sony and Cher skit singing "I got you babe" complete with wigs

Several other brave souls shared their karaoke "talents" as well as their dancing "skills" - like John and Kathy.





The ladies did a wonderful job performing a couple of songs as well as Larry and our newest member, Aaron Ross. From the expressions their faces, I'm not sure who had more fun - the performers or the audience. Regardless, we all had a great time and lots of laughs.



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Steve and Rita's high tech music trivia game allowed us to use our cell phones to submit answers. Each game consisted of about a dozen nicely paced questions and a computer kept score. Pam won two games and Aaron won one. The evening was a lot of fun, and we owe it all to Steve and Rita!

The Thoroughbred Museum gave us a nice tour of their beautiful facility. We all left with a better appreciation for the impact these wonderful horses have had on Florida. For about an hour we were entertained with interesting and humorous stories of the horse owners and their beautiful racehorses.



Though the facility was small, it was packed full of history and contained many hidden gems. The twin oak staircase and iron railing at the entry way was incredible and immediately caught our attention. The overhead lights with the horse motif

complemented the stair railing. Our guide showed us the huge horseshoe shaped Board of Directors table that was custom made for the facility as well as the receptionist's desk under the staircase.







As the tour was winding down several of our group enjoyed the comfortable leather chairs with unique decorative shotgun shell tacking.



Following morning we went to First Watch for breakfast then returned for a discussion on the upcoming SMART National and East Region Musters. We shared some early information about the upcoming 2026 East Region Muster and will be sending details to all as the schedule solidifies.

In the afternoon we held our Chapter Meeting then were proud to watch Steve Bourque be



sworn in as President of the Gold Coasters. That evening we enjoyed a wonderful dinner at Milanos Italian Grill.





## Upcoming Musters:

### Joint Buccaneer/Gold Coaster Veterans Day Muster

Arrive: November 10, 2025 --- Depart: November 14<sup>th</sup>

Encore Sunshine Travel

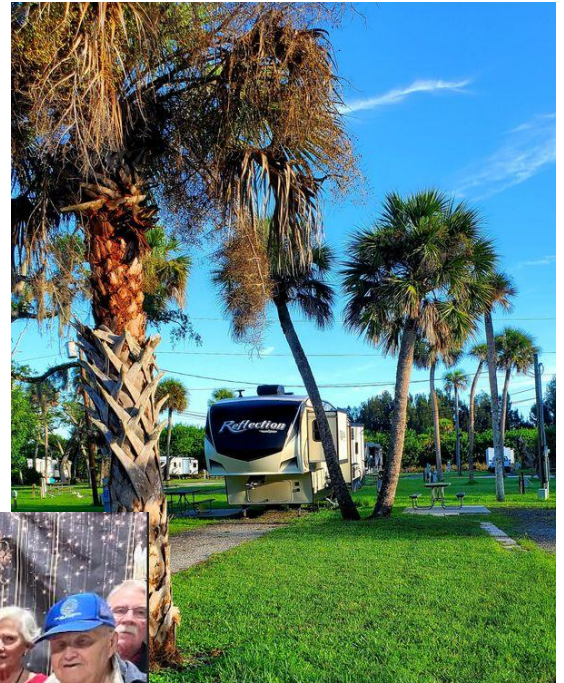
9455 108<sup>th</sup> Ave, Vero Beach FL 32967

<https://www.rvonthego.com/florida/sunshine-travel-rv-resort/>

### 2025 National Muster

Arrive: September 15, 2025 --- Depart: September 20<sup>th</sup>

Minneola Civics Center, Mineola, TX



Buccaneers at 2024  
SMART National Muster  
Ladson, SC

### 2026 East Region Muster

\* Arrive: April 20, 2026 --- Depart: April 25<sup>th</sup>

Coastal Georgia RV Park, Brunswick, GA 31523

\*Joint Buccaneers/Gold Coasters Murder Mystery pre-muster. Details will follow!

## BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES

### **BIRTHDAYS**

Bill Hastings	08 May
Tom Barrett	11 May
Lynn Barrett	02 June
Nancy Miller	02 June

Kathy Steinbauer	10 June
Joanne Hastings	15 June
Nancy Stephens	22 June
Tony Debello	01 July
Tony Mason	04 July
Nancy Karwatka	24 July

### **ANNIVERSARIES**

Tom and Lynn Barrett	10 May
Tony and Judy Debello	29 May
Tony and Gina Mason	10 June