

Title: Key West Oral History Interview with Maggie Bartel Kivel

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Unknown: We're not doing something right.
[audio cuts off]

Mary Malone: Introducing Maggie Bartel, a byline name well-known in New York as a reporter for the *New York Daily News* for many years who is settled here in Key West and loves it. Maggie?

Kivel: Thank you very much, Mary. On this tape, we will inform you of some of the odd street names as they were when Key West was and as they are today. We will also bring you some local beliefs and recommended medical remedies and an anecdote or two about persons with odd nicknames. It seems a little odd, Mary, you know, I bought a house on--a Conch house on South Street and had it remodeled and live next door to you now. It's thanks to you we bought the house. But I never could get through my head why they called it 'South Street' because South Street runs due east and west. But it develops that it was the southernmost street for years because beyond it were only salt ponds and it ends at the southernmost point of the United States. [audio recorder drops] A little interruption there. Now some of the odd street names as they were and as they are now include Grunt Bone Alley, which is now Pecan Lane; Chicken Alley, now Bahama Street; High Tide Alley, now Elgin Street; Johnny Cake Alley, which is the left-hand end of Love Lane. Now, one of these streets, Truman Avenue, had a number of names. Before its present designation as Truman Avenue, it was Rocky Road and Division Street. At the intersection of Truman Avenue, we have-- and Margaret Street, we have the Margaret Truman Launderette. I bet Margaret got a big kick out of that. Wall Street- one block long- was originally Water Street. It was renamed for a merchant named William H. Wall, circa 1825. Of twenty-nine streets, fourteen percent of them are names for women relatives of early settlers. For example, we have Catherine Street, Frances Street, Lavinia [Virginia] Street, Margaret Street--

M: Angela Street.

K: Angela Street, Ann Street, Rose Street, Rose Lane. We have Billie Boat Lane, which is now Hibiscus Lane. Frances Street downtown turns into Whalton, W-H-A-L-T-O-N, Whalton Street. We have Free School Lane, Poorhouse Lane, Shavers Lane, and Passover Lane, which is by the cemetery; now you can figure out why they named it Passover. Now, for some of the local beliefs: there are people here who believe that some barracuda is poisonous. But that if you cut up the big fish and boil it with a dime, if the dime turns black, you throw out the fish. If the dime remains silver, it's supposed to be okay to eat it. The theory behind this is that it all depends on where the barracuda feeds. For example, if it feeds on bottom-fish who have eaten blue-green algae, that is reputed to make it poisonous. Now, some of the local remedies and, incidentally, the local Conchs seem down here to live for years and years. I know my doctor told me that the days they lived on grits and grunts during the Depression when the city was bankrupt and they turned in their charter, didn't hurt them a bit. He said they have cardiograms like sixteen year olds. Now, here are some of their remedies for keeping healthy. If you have stomach pains, take hot water and a pinch of salt. If you have congestion, cough, take sugar with two drops of kerosene, that reputedly will break it up. For a cut finger, you stick it in a glass of kerosene, that reputedly stops the bleeding, sterilizes the wound, and eases the pain. Now, if you should happen to step on a rusty nail, the Conchs don't believe you should run right to the doctor and get a shot of Tetanus. Oh, no. Put a penny on the puncture and bandage to keep the coin in place and as they say down here, "Leave it lay where Jesus flung it." Now we'll go into a few little anecdotes about odd nicknames. There was a very well-known chap named Charlie Rice and he passed away and his mother was heartbroken when almost none of his friends appeared for the funeral services. It developed later that none of his friends knew Charlie Rice had passed away because the obituary in the newspaper referred to his proper name, which was Charles Roberts. Another odd name was Arthur Edward Law who was named 'Ah-ah' and there was quite a story about Ah-ah Law being remembered as a fine softball pitcher. Very famous man was called 'Date Pie Pappy,' apparently he had a pension for date pie until he became very rich and they forgot about the Date Pie Pappy and called him 'Mr. Pappy'. I have a neighbor across the street, Henry Higgs and his wife Phyllis, they're real Conchs, descendants of Conch

families. His father was called 'Bubba,' he has an uncle who was known only as 'Two by Four' and another uncle who was called 'Old Ropes'. We hope you find this entertaining.

M: That's it?

K: You wanna stop it?

END OF INTERVIEW