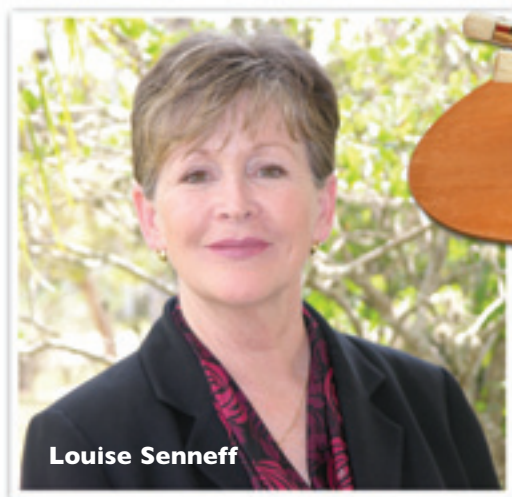


Making Waves is Times of the Islands' honor roll for residents of Southwest Florida's island coast who, in their everyday lives, make the community special. —by Karen Nelson

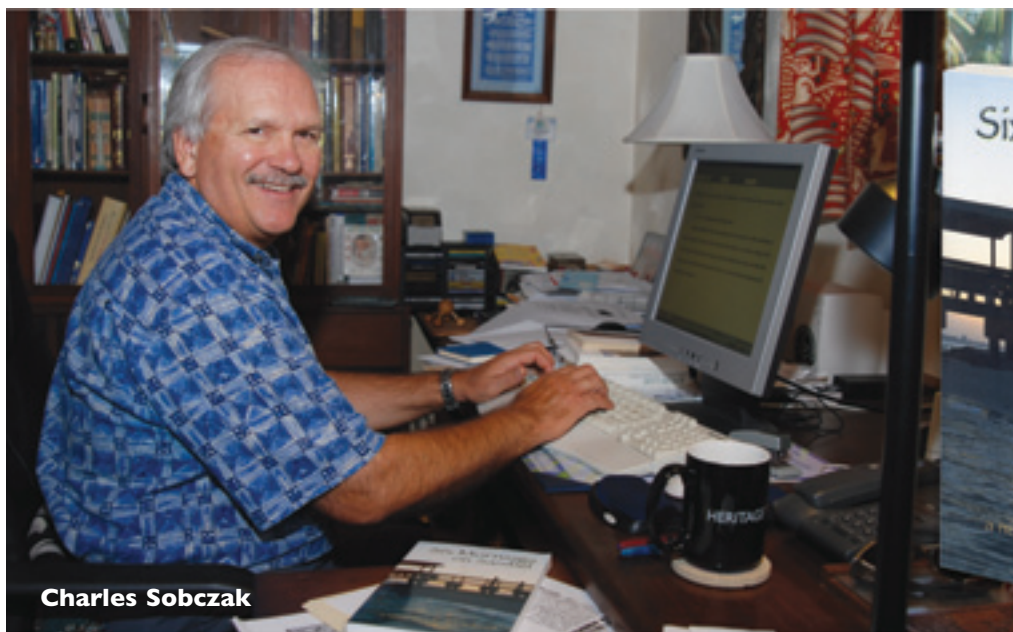


Louise Senneff



◀ A special farewell...

Under the guidance of Executive Director Louise Senneff, the Alliance for the Arts has become a dynamic leader in Lee County, giving vibrant expression to the explosive growth of our local arts scene. *Times of the Islands* would like to pay tribute to an extraordinary achievement, and, Louise, we wish you the very best in all future endeavors. We know you'll shine!



Charles Sobczak

▶ Self-publishing success

Self-published Sanibel author Charles Sobczak has sold over forty thousand books, proving that a gamble can pay off. "It's not a huge profit center but we do okay," he notes. "It's self-sustaining, and during peak season, we can sell one thousand books a month."

Sobczak works hard promoting his Indigo Press titles, selling through Baker & Taylor and other major distributors and bookstore chains, plus marketing to

schools and libraries through the Publishers Marketing Association. However, self-publishing brings its frustrations. "There are no reviews for self-published books," says Sobczak. There is a perceived lack of credibility. "It's tough," he says. "However, for self-published authors, awards can be your redemption. If you can't get reviews, you can get awards." Sobczak has won both national and local awards.

When he self-published his first title, *Six Mornings on Sanibel* in 1999, he was a top-listing real estate agent, not looking for a career change. He also felt the book would be most appropriate for a local audience. However, there were then no other fiction titles set on Sanibel and it caught on: He sold eight thousand copies in a little over a year. *Way Under Contract* was published in fall 2000 and won the Patrick D. Smith award in 2001. Sobczak

sold a total of twenty thousand books in 2000 and 2001, and then came 9/11. A year or two later, Sanibel fiction titles began appearing from other local authors. Indigo Press sales are still healthy but not at pre-9/11 levels.

Having sold more than twenty thousand books qualifies him as a midlist author with a good following. “If your

sales for self-published titles are over five thousand copies, you’re supposed to submit to an agent,” he explains—which he is planning to do with his next novel. “*Chain of Fools* is a fictionalized autobiography of my screwed-up family,” says Sobczak. Set in Duluth, Minnesota, it features his grandmother, One-eyed Maggie, a bootlegging hooker. “I’m hav-

ing the time of my life writing it,” he says.

“I’m very happy with where things are... I write what’s in my heart, following my heart and my dream and—in the end—that’s worth as much as any other success.”

To learn more about Indigo Press titles by Charles Sobczak, visit www.indigopress.net, e-mail indigocontact@earthlink.net, or call 239-472-0491.



Richard McCurry (left) and Ken Loewit



▲ A new course at the Sanibel Café

The rope is down at the Sanibel Café, and long-time islanders Richard McCurry and Ken Loewit are in.

Richard and Ken brought ownership status to their long-time secondary careers in island restaurants when they bought the Café in June 2006. Both have been part of the fabric of island life for decades: Richard as an active Optimist and Bank of America AVP, while Ken worked with Carrie Lund and Bob Cacioppo at the Pirate Playhouse, and then with J.T. Smith at the Schoolhouse Theater. He now teaches theater at Wellesley College in Massachusetts, which keeps him away from Sanibel for three-quarters of the year.

A long stint together at Island Pizza—where “we were such a great team and so invested in the job,” said Loewit, “that customers used to ask if we owned the place”—planted the seed of ownership. When Ken heard that the

Sanibel Café was up for sale, he called Richard and pointed out that they weren’t getting any younger. “Let’s make it happen,” he said. “Let’s make the dream real.”

Richard called then-owner Ken Boyce the next day. “Ken and Lynda Boyce made it happen,” acknowledges McCurry. “I’ve known them for years. When they heard I was interested, they really wanted to see it come to me.”

They debated a name change but decided against it; Loewit adds, wryly, “although people call it ‘Richard’s Place’ because he’s there full-time.”

“We wanted to create a place where you could go and feel comfortable,” says McCurry, “where people would feel welcome, with a warm and friendly staff that knows you by name.”

Key ingredients to the successful transition are manager Debbie, Chef Betty Boop, rib king Doug E. Fresh, and Mary, the friendly face at the door.

Everything on the menu is made from scratch, including an amazingly tender sautéed gator tail. “An old Florida cracker came in one day,” says McCurry. “He was a licensed gator hunter and said that wherever he went, he ordered gator. He told us our gator had potential but it wasn’t good, and he told us how to prepare it.” The man obviously knew his gators.

Richard and his wife Meg were married at St. Isabel’s and raised three daughters on the island. Ken and wife Julie Remele spend a quarter of the year on Sanibel.

A career that was over twenty years in the making has launched a tasty new course for Richard McCurry and Ken Loewit. 🦎

If you know of someone who deserves recognition, call us at 239-472-0205 or send an e-mail to editor@toti.com.