



President's Message: September 2023

I don't usually get too emotional at the loss of a public figure but, once in a while something happens that gets to me. It happened in 1999 when golfer Payne Stewart and five others lost cabin pressure in Stewart's Learjet 35 and crashed in South Dakota. The plane had traveled 1500 miles on autopilot until it ran out of fuel and came down. He was one of my favorite golfers and I had long admired him. It was such a shock when he was lost in such a bizarre tragedy. It happened again this year on the first of September when Jimmy Buffett died from skin cancer.

Before I retired, I drove 49 miles each way from my home in Apollo Beach to my workplace in Clearwater. I often thought how much better it would be to be going under the bridge out to sea than heading over the bridge into traffic and another day at the office. On the way over I listened to the Mason Dixon morning show on radio Q105 but, on the way home I always played one of Jimmy Buffett's albums.

The music was perfect as I cruised over the Skyway bridge looking down at the sparkling water, small boats, and ships of all kinds.

Jimmy Buffett was a fly fisherman. He wrote about it in his semi-autobiographical book "[A Pirate Looks at 50](#)". He was part of an elite group that discovered a new striped bass fishery and fine-tuned the best methods to catch them on the fly. His sister, Laurie, is married to legendary fly fishing author Thomas McGuane.

In recent years Jimmy could be found chasing bonefish on a stand-up paddleboard with a graphite rod and Tibor reel. He often sprinkled fly fishing references into his social media posts.

For me it was a shock to learn that Jimmy Buffett had died. We now know that he had battled skin cancer for several years, but I was unaware of his condition. I know that like Payne Stewart I will think about him from time to time for the rest of my life.

Thanks. Stay safe and keep fishing!

Rick

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