

days, simply "the Beach." A launch made the round trip there once a day, and it was a place to swim and picnic on the sands. I did not like going over there because the mosquitoes were so thick they blackened anyone brave enough to venture into the place, which has since been called "the only jungle in North America." Spider crabs and alligators and fat snakes did not add to its charms for me. Here was primeval Florida, this jungle strip between Biscayne Bay and the Atlantic that would later be world-famed as Miami Beach.

Carl had bought the Miami house as a winter vacation home with every intention of eventually settling down. Newspapers at the time stated that the Prest-O-Lite king, Carl Fisher, had retired to Florida. He had many big undertakings well in hand in the Middle West which he expected to liquidate gradually. He had no plans for starting any activities in the South.

John Levi was with us on this winter vacation. It was not in Carl to lounge in the sun, even on holiday—he was too restless. So Carl and John took the little motor boat to explore Biscayne Bay and the many fascinating waterways leading into the jungle fastnesses of Florida. Sometimes they explored the Beach. In the brackish waters, blue hyacinths impeded their progress. Vines and mangrove and the bristly little palmettos made dark colonades.

On one of these visits in the jungle Carl chanced upon one of the few men brave enough to live on the Beach. This was John S. Collins, a seventy-five-year-old Quaker with brave blue eyes and gentle speech. Carl was at once attracted to him. I think, most of all, Carl appreciated his quality of courage. This gentle Quaker dreamed bravely. He was trying without aid to build a bridge two and a half miles long—"the longest wooden bridge in the world"—across the waters of Biscayne Bay.

The bridge had been planned to connect the Beach with the mainland, and behind its building lay the life story of John Collins. It has been called "a story written in trees." Collins was a New Jersey horticulturist who hoped to introduce tropical fruit trees to United States. Thirty years earlier he had come to the Beach with the idea of growing coconuts on the strip of jun-

gland. He bought ocean frontage from the Government, most of it at seventy-five cents an acre, and with the aid of Negro labor brought Trinidad coconuts on barges close to the shore and then floated them onto the Beach. The nuts were nailed to ropes planted at twenty-foot intervals.

Wild rabbits and the harsh ocean winds ruined John Collins' coconut trees, and only a few of his original palms are among those now luxuriating at Miami Beach. Undaunted, the little Quaker persisted in his plan for a tropical orchard. West of Indian Creek at about the intersection of Pine Tree Drive and forty first street and south to twenty-eighth street was fairly high ground, not swampy but covered with a tough palmetto growth. Collins had cleared this land and set out three thousand young avocado trees, the first planted in the United States. The original Australian pine trees John S. Collins planted as windbreak protection for his young avocados still stand tall and stately on Pine Tree Drive. Later Carl Fisher made a bridle path for me between those trees where tourists would gape from their automobiles in amazement as I galloped under the lacy pine branches. Today Pine Tree Drive is one of the fine residential streets of Miami Beach.

Carl went to see the avocados—alligator pears they were called then—and to tease Collins, Carl always called them "alligator apples." Their rich dark globes hung from the sturdy trees in the heart of the jungle strip. It was a bumper crop, but it was being forced to wither untasted in the jungle.

John Collins had been able to introduce samples of the luscious fruit to a few select tables on the east coast. Delmonico's in New York was serving the avocado at a dollar and half as a dessert. But Collins had no way of getting the major part of his crop across Biscayne Bay to the mainland.

He had to build a road to the bay, a road which is now Collins Avenue, but the wagon trip was long for the delicate fruit; and to expedite delivery, he had dug a canal from Pancost Lake to Biscayne Bay. His method of laying out the route was surely unique in the history of engineering. On a windless day he built a fire at the head of Indian Creek, and the smoke drift deter-