

The banker and Carl had both been country boys. Both had worked on railroads, and both loved to laugh. The banker was one of the few businessmen who did not call Carl Fisher a fool for digging down to his last cent to build a city on sand. They were in Carl's office in Miami Beach discussing the loan when Carl asked suddenly, "Do you see the rug on this floor?" The banker answered, "Why, yes, Carl; it's turned wrong side out." Carl showed his dimples. "That's a goddamned expensive rug. The right side was worn off by bankers who came over here to lend me money, so I turned it over, and now, by God, the creditors are wearing out the other side!"

The Flamingo was Carl's biggest building project since starting the Beach. Its dome, a fifteen-thousand-dollar globe of jeweled glass lighted by varicolored floodlights, was visible seven miles out to sea. The name of the hotel came to Carl after a cruise he took to the Andros Islands in the Bahamas, with John Levi, John Oliver LaGorce and Jim Allison. They saw a cloud of flame they took to be a sunset. Then they realized it was in the wrong direction for the sun. The pink cloud lifted and they saw the wings of thousands of gloriously colored flamingos.

Carl came home raving over the decorative possibilities of the birds. "They're the most beautiful creatures you ever saw in your life. I'm going to bring some to Miami Beach. That's what I'm going to call the new hotel—The Flamingo."

Carl brought the first flamingos to Miami Beach, but they did not live. Then he sent Louis Fuertes, at that time the greatest bird and animal painter, to the Bahamas. The lifelike Fuertes murals of the slim-legged, hibiscus-tinted birds are remembered by all who have visited the Flamingo Hotel. Carl told the painter, "No one will ever believe those birds are as bright as you have painted them, and still they aren't as bright a pink as we saw them in the Bahamas."

He brought more flamingos to Miami Beach. Bright pink flamingos in the gardens of the new hotel—black swans drifting in Indian Creek—Carl was indeed building his city to match the posters of his dreams!

President Harding was among the first guests of the Flamingo. This was when Rosie caddied for him, gravely swinging her

trunk bearing the golf clubs of the President of the United States, and made news, as everything that happened in Miami Beach was beginning to make news.

Carl actually shanghied the President right out from under the nose of the pip squeak Miami reception committee and took him aboard the "Shadow K" up to the Flamingo Hotel penthouse where a poker game and plenty of scotch were waiting. The committee cooled their heels for hours along the inland waterway waiting for President Harding to appear.

For whatever it may be worth, my own experience with President Harding may throw some light upon the so vividly publicized domestic life of this charming but unhappy President. I met him at the dinner table of the Harvey Firestones where, through some happy inspiration, I chose to tell him a number of dialect stories. Somehow we got on the subject of baked green turtle in the shell.

"Mr. President," I found myself saying, "you haven't tasted baked green turtle in the shell until you've eaten it the way our cook fixes it." I neglected to add that the cook had long since vanished, and I had no idea how the dish was made.

I was stupefied when I heard the President eagerly promise to be at our home for dinner the following evening.

It just so happened, however, that in Miami was an old Mammy cook from Nassau who knew how to bake green turtle. She worked for our friends, the Gaston Drakes, but she would not give out the recipe, and she never allowed anyone to watch her cooking. With the Drakes' permission I lured her to The Shadows the next day for the express purpose of creating a Presidential baked turtle.

But that solved only half my problem. Where to find a turtle this side of the Bahamas? I thought of the Aquarium. Jim Allison had at last fallen for Carl's new city, and spent part of his time on the Beach, where he had built the new Aquarium on Biscayne Bay at Fifth Street. I drove there. One lone green turtle was on exhibit. Jim, however, refused to release his hard-shelled charge.

"Jim, you just have to give me that turtle!" I begged "It's for the President."