

Dream State: Eight Generations of Swamp Lawyers, Conquistadors, Confederate Daughters, Banana Republicans and Other Florida Wildlife.

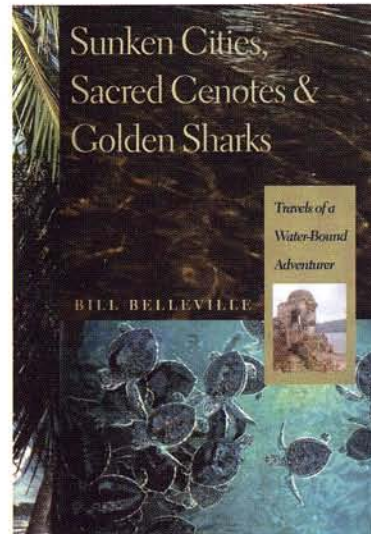
By Diane Roberts.

It's hard to believe that Diane Roberts could live anywhere but Florida. This grand-daughter of old Florida teaches English at the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa, but her book *Dream State: Eight Generations of Swamp Lawyers, Conquistadors, Confederate Daughters, Banana Republicans and Other Florida Wildlife* is a rollicking, howlingly funny history of the sublime and the just plain weird in Florida politics. Roberts, who is a descendant of the Broward families (yes, the Napoleon Bonaparte Broward Bridge [otherwise known as the Dames Point Bridge] family), has a cracked view of the travails of her forebears and of the current mess of development, politics, and proper Southern society in the Sunshine State.

Dream State begins (of course!) in Tallahassee in 2000—just ten days after the Bush-Gore election—with the pain Floridians feel about Florida being the center of the media frenzy: The current unpleasantness over the presidential election is like a hurricane. An act of God. Not our fault. This hurricane has ripped off a few roofs, re-arranged the lawn furniture, and brought down some big tree limbs. But soon it will be over. The clouds will clear. Then we can go back to the Florida that's about fun, fun and sun and money, back to the Florida that pretends very hard the past doesn't matter.

Roberts goes on to lampoon Spanish Conquistadors, Henry Flagler, two hundred years' worth of politicians and judges, moonshiners (often the same folks), developers and Elian Gonzalez. Nothing is sacred in *Dream State*. As my good friend and long-time entertainer the Reverend Billy C. Wirtz says, "Sacred Cows make a great burger—you just need to know when to flip 'em!" Diane Roberts flips 'em pretty well in this book; it's a must-read for long-time and short-time Floridians.

Published by Free Press. 340 pages.



Sunken Cities, Sacred Cenotes and Golden Sharks: Travels of a Water-Bound Adventurer

By Bill Belleville

Bill Belleville is a Florida treasure. The adventurer, explorer, author and filmmaker is touched by every atom of Florida, and writes poetically about her natural beauty and its effect on him. Over the years, Belleville has been around the world on assignment for *Outdoor*, *Skin Diver*, *National Geographic*, and a number of sports-based magazines, and he has taken notes on the feelings those places give him—the "sense of place"—as well as the architecture and beauty of the sites.

Sunken Cities, Sacred Cenotes and Golden Sharks: Travels of a Water-Bound Adventurer is an anthology of the best of Belleville's "sense of place" writing. This two hundred-thirty-odd page volume contains wonderful essays on some of the coolest places you'd ever want to be: from Belleville's own backyard in the Seminole State Forest through Central and South America to the Galapagos Islands, our master storyteller weaves and shapes history, culture, adventure, and a few cold beers into a remarkable and wonderfully readable narrative.

Belleville regales us with tales of local rednecks at Suwannee River watering holes and stories about Sir Francis Drake's antics in Panama, records with near-lascivious prose the annual and rarely observed mating of coral [!], and recites the daily routine of cowboy conch-wranglers in the Turks and Caicos. You'll wish you could be with Bill as he meets some of the most interesting people on the planet, watches some of the most amazing events ever witnessed, and (luckily for us) writes of his adventures in his journal each day. South Georgia author Janisse Ray once said of Belleville, "I would travel with him to the ends of the earth!" Take a copy of this book to your favorite tree-shaded porch, pop open a cold beer, and off you go!

Published by University of Georgia Press. 229 pages.

These books and other festival favorites are available at Books Plus, 107 Centre Street. Books Plus is an Amelia Book Island Festival sponsor. Teresa "Teri" Sopp, a native Floridian, is an attorney who practices criminal defense in Nassau County.