

et- ay | A FULL-TIME HOUSE- Assistant? If you answered
 turning to Key West, he some baskets. "No," Butler and calmly in "The Conchetter
 former classmate, Conchette right now, come a Certified Nursing Assistant? If you answered
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Home court advantage

New Key West basketball coach Bill Butler has been there, done that

By **TED LUND**
 Citizen Sports Writer

28 April 99

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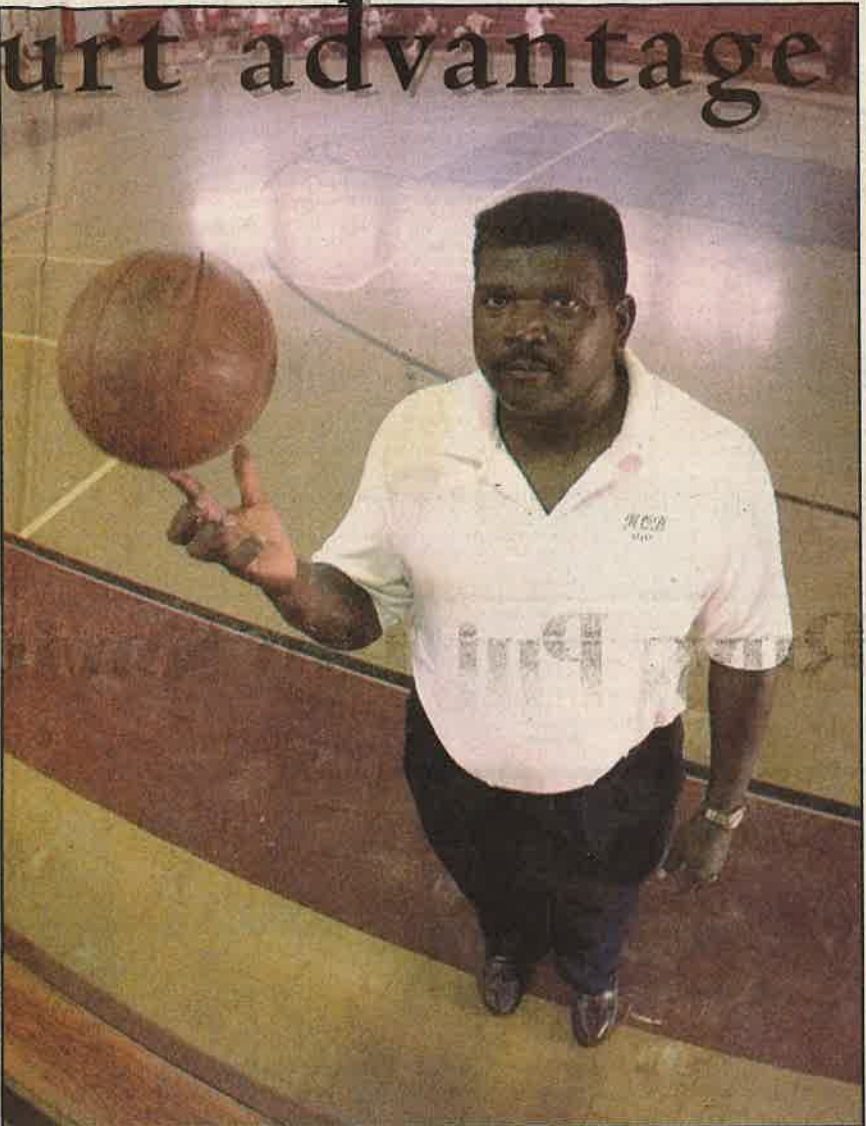
With the announcement on Monday by Key West High School athletic director Pat Freeman that Butler would be coming on board in the fall as the Conchs' coach, the program brought probably the single greatest player in the history of the program back into the fold.

"Thinking about taking the job, I'd have to say that I am excited, but also a little nervous," said Butler, looking around the gym he called home for four years.

Excited, he said, because of the opportunity to lead his alma mater and help in the rebuilding of Conch Pride.

"The reaction of the community has been overwhelming in its support of me taking this job," said Butler. "It reminds me of the old days when we were playing for the state title. Just all positive."

Nervous, he said, because he has been away from coaching high school athletes for more than



MIKE HENTZ/The Citizen

HOME AGAIN: Bill Butler returns to the familiar court at Key West High School as the new Conchs' coach.

tantly, I want to develop a coaching team that can have input into the direction of the program."

That team, so far, consists of JV coach Elliot Bacon, Rollie Castinyera and Kelly Armstrong, all strong supporters of the Police Athletic League

coming in, and who knows who might be interested in the team," he said, "I hope that every child that comes in and wants to move up the ranks, we should give them a chance."

with source Tuesday, we're not o... otic... ing



Coffee Butler

Coffee keeps perkin' along

By MARSHA GORDON

Take a shot of jazz, a splash of calypso, stir it with sugar blues, pour it into a tropical flowered shirt and you've got The longest lasting coffee break in town... Coffee Butler.

Butler's been pouring it out in his native Key West as a professional musician since 1944. Still in high school when a group of the boys formed a musical combo, coffee discarded his saxophone when the group realized they didn't have a pianist.

He's been on the bench ever since.

Memories bubble out of Coffee's smile as he recalls the last 37 years of show biz in his home town.

"The war years were the boomiest. Everybody worked double shift.

"The big bands came down the road. Even Satchmo played the old Imperial Cafe over on Whitehead Street. There was gambling in the Cabana Club and I played

out front...kinda drawing card."

"I was at the Bamboo Room on Smith Lane and Tallulah Bankhead sat on my piano. I told her I loved her movies. I can't tell you what she told me," he grinned.

In the late '40's a teen-aged Coffee Butler washed dishes in the huge kitchens of the Casa Marina to supplement his income as a musician. He dreamed of maybe, someday playing there professionally.

In December, 1978, the Casa Marina opened its doors, Coffee Butler opened his mouth and customers opened their hearts. He's been there ever since, playing numbers by everyone from Bessie Smith to George Benson.

The sure sign of a beloved entertainer is the way bartenders react to him. Ask any barkeep at the Casa. Coffee's the best. Just keep the "Seabreezes" blowing and flowing and Coffee keeps perking along

AWC

29 Nov 1981

FAMILIAR FACES:

An ongoing series that looks at the people who make up our island community

9 Feb 2016

Butler still tickles the ivories with a twinkle in his eye

BY MANDY MILES

Key West Citizen

Coffee Butler remembers riding out the deadly hurricane of 1935 in his family's home on Olivia Street.

He was about 7 years old, and can still remember the house shaking, he said Monday, nearly 81 years after the hurricane destroyed the railroad in the Upper Keys and killed hundreds of workers.

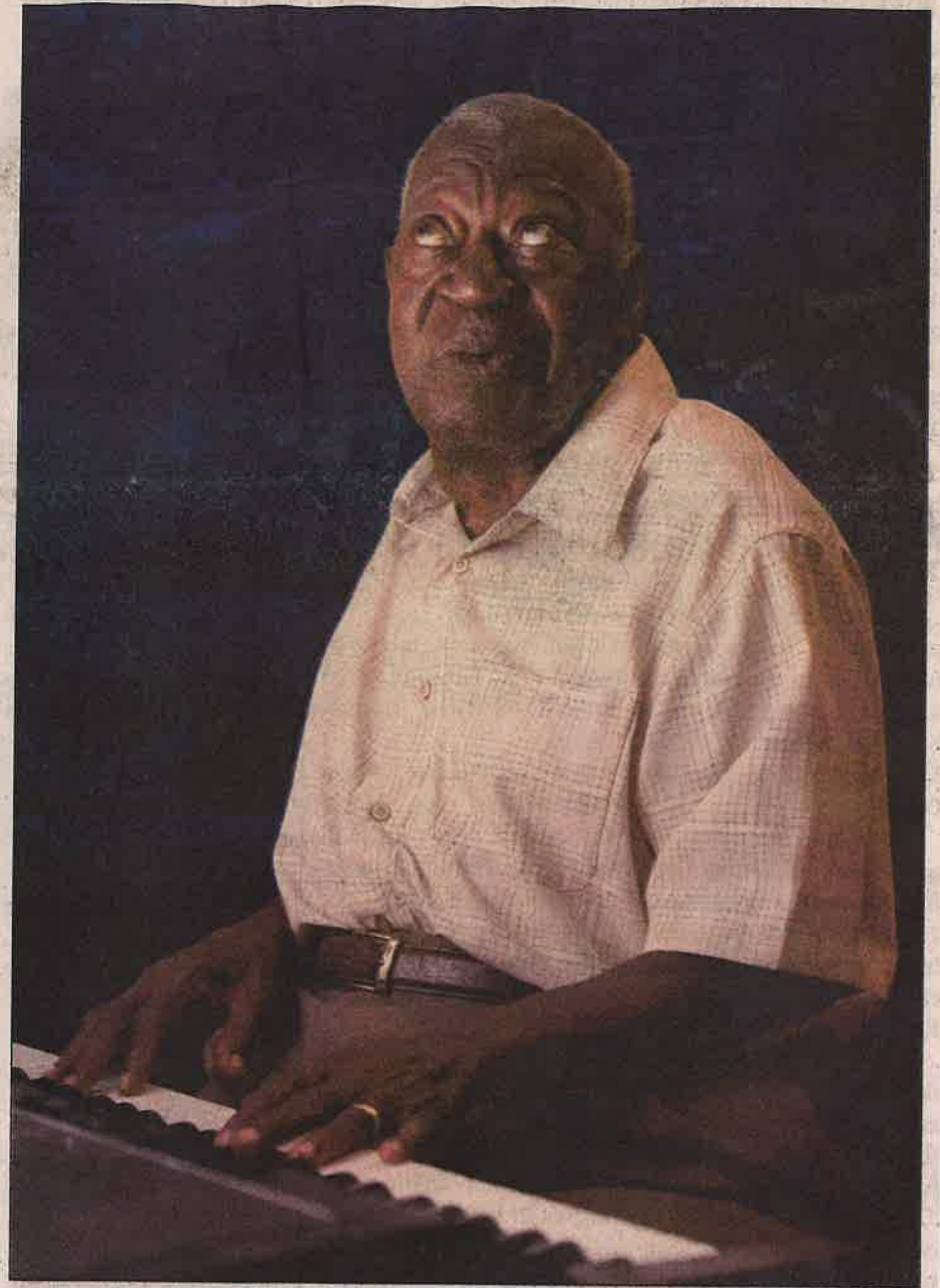
He remembers when World War II took several of his older friends, many of them musicians and baseball players, to war.

And at 87 years old, the piano player's mind and fingers still remember the words and music to the hundreds of songs he's been playing since he started taking piano lessons in high school.

"On the isle sweet contentment / where they never hold resentment / The breeze in the trees / blue sky and palms growing high / a tropical moon / lovers can spoon / on the beautiful isle of Key West," Butler sang Monday afternoon, playing the electric keyboard that's tucked in a guest room at his Stock Island home.

Butler's — and the entire island's — music teacher, Ellen Sanchez, wrote the tribute song to her hometown.

"She had me play it for



ROB O'NEAL/The Citizen

Lofton 'Coffee' Butler fires up his electric piano Monday on Stock Island and delivers a rousing rendition of 'Who Put the Pepper?', one of his favorite tunes. The 87-year-old singer/songwriter has been tickling the ivories in Key West since the 1940s.

President Truman when he came to visit her music class at the old convent at St. Mary's," said Butler, who was born Lofton Butler in 1928.

"I had an aunt named Alice, who was about 10 years older than me," he said. "She used to call me 'Loffie'. Then one day a friend changed it to 'Coffee' and I've been Coffee ever

since, although I used to say they call me Coffee because I'm so stimulating."

His eyes shined with a trademark twinkle as his fingers found the notes to a song of Bahamian origin that, like Butler himself, is filled with double entendres.

"My parents were born here in Key West, but my grandparents came from

Green Turtle Cay, Key West's sister city in the Bahamas," he said, with a trace of an island accent still audible in his baritone voice.

Aside from a two-year stint in the Army when he was drafted after high school, and a year playing semi-pro baseball in West Palm Beach, Butler has

County may honor Bill Butler

Monroe County Commissioner Wilhelmina has sponsored a resolution which, if passed, will commit Monroe County to assisting in "the case and upkeep" of the park in Key West named after Bill Butler, a musician who died recently.

The resolution, which was added to the agenda by Harvey at the County Commission meeting in Plantation Key last Friday, has not been approved yet because Harvey needed to leave the meeting before the item was brought up. It was postponed until the next County Commission meeting, so that Harvey could be present.

The resolution honors Bill Butler, saying that he "devoted his life to the betterment of the Florida Keys and in particular Key West." The proposed commendation also commits the County to "cooperate in any needed requirement to beautify said park and in so doing to cooperate with any agencies which are involved or which will be involved in this endeavor." The park, named after the late Butler, who was a leader in the popular performing group, "The Junkanoos, "should be perpetually cared for and continued as a memorial of the outstanding human example he rendered to this area," according to the proposed resolution.

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