



Real estate broker with deep roots in Treasure Coast tells ‘How a Fisherman’s Grandson Became a Cowboy’

by Community Post

Local commercial and acreage real estate broker Ricou “Rick” Hartman is a rare kind of living history. His ancestry weaves three of Stuart’s major founding families, without whom Stuart may not have been established: the Ricous, the McDonalds, and the Hartmans.

A traditional country man, he is widely known for not only his familiarity with the Treasure Coast but the history of our natural lands dating to the 1800s.



Speaker Ricou “Rick” Hartman answers a question from the audience during his presentation, “How a Fisherman’s Grandson Became a Cowboy,” at the Nov. 8 Stuart Heritage meeting. More than 100 residents filled the Stuart City Hall Commission Chambers for the evening’s program. (Photo by Jennifer Whiting)

On Hartman’s maternal side, R.R. Ricou owned a large part of Florida’s thriving fishing industry in the early 1900s, with eleven fish houses from Cape Canaveral to Key West. R.R. Ricou and Henry Flagler were good friends, even partnering after the Jensen Beach Fire of 1908 to restore the town’s commerce with its own rail station on the historic Flagler railroad.

On Hartman’s paternal side, J.B. McDonald was a former Methodist minister and the superintendent of schools when Stuart was originally part of Palm Beach County.

McDonald was also instrumental in the movement to incorporate Stuart in 1914 and served as Stuart's first mayor.

The intertwining of the McDonalds and Hartmans occurred when J.B.'s daughter, Mary Elizabeth, married Ralph Hartman Sr., Stuart's long-time postmaster. Two sons in the next generation of Hartmans and McDonalds went on to become Stuart mayors as well.

Hartman is very involved in local government and planning efforts, has faithfully served to advocate for the agricultural land owners of Martin County and its historic preservation as it changes through the generations.

Because their heritage is such a unique combination, Rick and his sister Karen recently agreed to give a presentation to the Stuart Heritage Group, packing the Stuart Commission Chambers with more than 100 people (a large turnout for their meetings).

- Jennifer Whiting

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