



# CUBA

*Roughly the size of Florida, Cuba has a population of 12 million, nine million less than Florida.*

**Cuban American Rotarian Maria Mendez recently led a Rotarian trip to Cuba. Mendez fled Cuba with her parents to the U.S. just prior to the government overthrow in 1959. Many of her extended family remain in her hometown of Cienfuegos on the southern coast of the Cuban island.**



*Rotarians Maria Mendez and Sam Adams pose with Havana’s children wearing their new little league uniforms provided by the Fairhope Sunset Rotary Club.*

Cuba has received heightened scrutiny over the last few weeks because of questionable remarks made by presidential candidate Senator Bernie Sanders (D Vermont) endorsing some of the late Fidel Castro's people programs implemented when he overthrew the then existing government by force in 1959 and replacing it with a Communist state that still exists today. The tensions between The United States and Cuba have culminated in the current US embargo of many of our goods from ever reaching this Caribbean island.

*continued on page 8A*

**Edward “Coach” Henry Jones III**  
 May 6, 1938 ~  
 February 17, 2020



**He Did It His Way!**  
 Alabama Gazette  
 Football Writer  
 2005 ~ 2020

See page 7A for more memories.



*Havana RC was formed in 1916 with the help of District Governor Frank Glass from Montgomery, Alabama.*

Rotary has adopted as its guiding principles the 4 Way Test of the things we (Rotarians) think, say, and do:

1. Is it the **TRUTH**
2. Is it **FAIR** to all concerned
3. Will it build **GOODWILL** and Better **FRIENDSHIPS**
4. Is it **BENEFICIAL** to all concerned



*Meeting place for the original Havana RC, hotel still in operation today.*

## LOOK

# The Fleeting Fig

*As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.*

## NEW PUBLICATION!

**Fun facts!  
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**Winner of Unscramble Box February 2020**

**B. Hooks**

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# CUBA

*Rotarian Trip to Cuba ... continued from page 1A*



*Maria Mendez pictured with Little League team after receiving their jerseys from the Rotarians.*



*Maria Mendez pictured with Little League team after receiving their jerseys from the Rotarians.*



*Rotary Monument in Cienfuegos dedicated to its founder.*



*DAY ONE: Rotarians stayed at the Five-Star Iberostar Parque Central Hotel in the downtown Havana.*



*DAY TWO: FSRC presented Little League uniforms to several teams in and around Havana.*



*DAY THREE: An all-day excursion to family-run tobacco farms was on the agenda for the third day. INSET: Sam Adams takes a deep wiff of fresh tobacco leaves.*

But a recent trip in February 2020, sponsored by the Fairhope, Alabama Sunset Rotary Club, provided an opportunity to build a bridge of understanding and friendship with the Cuban people apart from its government.

Rotary is an international organizations of 1.2 million Rotarians in over 200 countries around the world. Those countries come in many ruling forms including democracies, republics, socialists, monarchies, communists and commonwealths, to name a few.

The trip leader of the contingent to Cuba was Cuban American Rotarian Maria Mendez, who fled Cuba with her parents to the U.S. prior to the government overthrow in 1959.

Many of her extended family members remain in her hometown of Cienfuegos on the southern coast of the Cuban island.

Maria came from a very successful and distinguished family. They lost everything as a result of the military coups that lead to exile, imprisonment and/or death to those that opposed the Castro regime.

After graduating from the University of Florida, Maria has had a successful career in her own right which has culminated in being the Director of Latin American Trade and Development for the Alabama State Port Authority in Mobile.

Maria has long put aside any anger or resentment she may have harbored since the coups and has focused on helping and working with the Cubans to build positive relationships where possible. Rotary's Past District Governor Sam Adams joined the group after realizing that Alabama has many positive connections with Cuba. The Rotary Motto "Service Above Self" was the catalyst that motivated Rotarians and friends to conduct a humanitarian effort to display Rotary's willingness to aid and work along side its neighbor (being inspired by Christ's parable found in Luke 10:25-37) by promoting peace and conflict prevention.

But one might ask why should a state like Alabama and an organization like Rotary get involved with the well being of Cuba?

The answers lie in our extensive history between the three entities. Here are just a few bullet point relationships:

1. Cuba's Spanish Governor Hernando DeSoto discovered and explored the interior land of what we now call Alabama in 1540.
2. The Guillott brothers, from Havana, attended Spring Hill College in Mobile in 1860 and upon their return to Cuba in 1864 introduced the game of baseball to the island and since then it has become Cuba's national sport.
3. In 1902, Dr William Gorgas, from Mobile, successfully eradicated an epidemic of yellow fever from Havana
4. The Havana Rotary Club formed in 1916 was the site for the first Rotary Club in Cuba, and Frank Glass, from Montgomery, served as its District Governor (District 5 included Alabama, Georgia, Florida and Cuba). It was the first non English speaking club for Rotary.
5. Over 60 Rotary clubs populated Cuba up until 1960 when all civic clubs were banned by the newly formed government by Castro
6. Since 1993, Mobile has been an official Sister City with Havana.
7. For more than 40 years the University of Alabama has had a working relationship with Cuba. Since 2002, almost 100 teachers have traveled to Cuba many repeatedly, to conduct research and creative work. Approximately 100 students have participated in study abroad programs in Cuba.

Recently, Fairhope Sunset RC has conducted several people to people official visits to Cuba for educational and humanitarian purposes including the latest effort which has led to the distribution of little league baseball uniforms to children in and around Havana in honor of Havana's 500 anniversary, as well as Alabama's 200th anniversary both occurring in the 2019-20 timeframe.

#### DAY 1:

This Fairhope Sunset Rotary Club (FSRC) adventure began on February 15, 2019 for one week. Two groups leaving from Atlanta and Miami respectively flew a short hour and a half landing in Havana, the only airport allowed to receive U S citizens.

The FSRC traveled under an authorized VISA issued by the Treasury Department which allows 12 different categories permitting visitation, including education and humanitarian purposes.

We met our escort in the parking lot and both groups boarded the bus to go to the Five-Star Iberostar Parque Central Hotel in the downtown Havana. That night we went to a private home which hosted a lavish supper for the weary travelers.

Cuba is on central time like Alabama, but the rush of meeting airplane and bus schedules took its toll.

#### DAY 2:

The following day on Sunday we boarded our bus and delivered the FSRC Little League uniforms to several teams in and around Havana. Most of the settings were in what we might consider bleak conditions, but the children and parents were happy, polite and welcoming to us. Maria and Sam explained why the FSRC had decided to give the uniforms which was based on:

1. Anniversaries, Havana 500, Alabama 200;
2. The baseball history of the Mobile and Havana, and
3. the areas of Rotary focus of peace and helping children.

The uniforms bore native flowers from both regions. On the back of the jersey a reference is made to 1864 baseball birth in Cuba.

The FSRC Rotary symbol is displayed over the heart, as permitted by Rotary International. After these festive occasions, the tour took a somber trip to Necropolis Cristobal Colon, also known as the Christopher Columbus Cemetery, which serves as the second largest cemetery in the Western Hemisphere. A Rotary plot is also present where any Cuban Rotarian could be buried.

Sadly, after the Revolution, it fell into disrepair and needs help. After a delicious meal at a local restaurant, the group boarded classic convertibles of the 1950s to take in a show at the Tropicana celebrating its 80th anniversary. At its conclusion we headed to out hotel to prepare for the next day.

#### DAY 3

Our band of Rotarians and friends boarded the bus early for an all day excursion to some family tobacco farms in the Vinales Valley, home of many of the world famous Cuban cigars.

Under Cuban law, no farm can be over about 160 acres, but families can own the land for agricultural purposes.

Ninety percent of the crops are sold to the government and sent to the factories for production. As we returned that night to Havana, one could not help but see the striking resemblance of the Cuban Capitol building to our own Capitol in Washington D.C.

Indeed, the Cuban structure was built using the same design as ours. It was constructed in three years between 1926-1929 using profits from sugar production. It housed the Cuban Congress from 1929-1959 and subsequently was used as the Cuban Academy of Science. It now houses the Cuban National Congress.

*Rotarian Trip to Cuba ... continued on next page*

*Rotarian Trip to Cuba ... continued on next page*

**DAY 4-5**

The next morning, Marianela San Pedro, a reporter for Radio Havana interviewed members of our team regarding the Rotary Club's trip to Havana. The interview took place in the luxurious lobby of our Iberostar Hotel. The Iberostar Group is owned by Spanish billionaire Miguel Rossello, the third generation heir to a shoe-making business.

Amy Thompson, from Mobile, helped translate and shared her observations with the reporter who was unfamiliar with Rotary and the outreach it has around the world.

Later that morning, the FSRC travelled to Old Havana and saw many structures dating back to the 16th and 17th centuries.

Fortresses and castles towered over the streets while a myriad of statues dedicated to heroes on horses seemed to parade down the Malecon (a broad roadway with a seawall). A Rotary statue erected in 1950 stands to pay homage to 50 or so Cuban seaman who perished while defending the Gulf of Mexico from Nazi U boats during WWII.

After lunch, the bus took us on an educational tour of some interesting sites to include Mirador Backonayagua, the highest bridge in Cuba and Cuevas de Bellamar, Cuba's largest cave. We hiked though tight spots and viewed beautiful rock and crystal formations. We reached our next destination, the Melia Varadero Hotel just in time to hop on a 70-foot catamaran and sail to a remote island for dinner. This 5-star, all-inclusive, facility is owned by another Spanish company. To get there, one must drive down some barren windswept shoreline to a remote but beautiful vista of the Caribbean. The road traffic is sparse and one often sees workers lined up to pick up a public bus or hitchhike with others which is allowed and encouraged due to the lack of transportation options.

As we settled down for the evening we enjoyed the daily Mojito, a rum-based concoction, a staple for the island.

The road network on a map appears to be extensive, but with speed limits not to exceed 60 mph, it takes a long time to get anywhere. Some routes exceeded four hours in duration on major thoroughfares. Two lane roads were slow, full of curves and potholes. The pace gave the traveler an opportunity to see first-hand the vast agrarian society found in outlying regions.

Groves of banana trees, fields of rice and tobacco, along with small farms dotted the landscape.

We stopped at Finca Agroecologicael Paraiso, a farm to table establishment that explained the cultivation, growth, harvest and distribution process. The farmer, whose name is Ravdel, raises peacocks and gives horse rides to supplement family income. Upon return, dinner was served at San Cristobal Paladar, a private Cuban restaurant in Old Havana.

**DAY 6**

Our next adventure took us to the cultural Mecca of Cuba, Cienfuegos. We explored Parque Jose Marti, a writer and philosopher who served as a catalyst for independence for the island. This square is replete with monuments and towers.

Art studios were common up and down the streets along with a famous theatre. The Catholic Church was the centerpiece of the area. Sixty percent of the population professes to be Catholic but only 5% practice. Protestants represent about 5% of Cubans.

While the State does not impede the practice of any religion, it is quick to monitor activities. Atheism conforms to the Marxist-Leninist doctrine, and Castro directed that non-atheists could not be a part of the Communist Party membership.

The walking tour also gave the visitor an opportunity to see how food staples are sold, including water. The process of food distribution is much different than our free market system and goods are often scarce.



**DAY FOUR/FIVE:** A Rotary statue erected in 1950 stands to pay homage to 50 or so Cuban seaman who perished while defending the Gulf of Mexico from Nazi U boats during WWII.

**DAY 7**

The bus took us on another 4-hour excursion to Trinidad, so named in honor of the Holy Trinity. Trinidad was the original landing spot for U.S. military's amphibious assault for the failed U.S. Bay of Pigs offensive to overthrow Castro. The terrain in Trinidad was hospitable and the population supportive. But our U.S. Intelligence changed the drop off point to a location, which had volcanic rock on the ocean floor and swamp at the beachhead, which made traversing almost impossible.

This town is older than Havana and still seems to be frozen in time.

Upon our return, the final evening's meal was at the La Barraca in the Hotel Nacional de Cuba, the country's leading hotel since 1930, when it is reputed to have been built and owned by the Mafia. We were once again serenaded with lovely Cuban music, and we walked in parts of the hotel frequented by movie stars and leaders from around the world.

**DAY 8**

On our final day, with passport in hand, we ventured to the airport and made a quick trip through Customs. The facility is roughly the size of Montgomery's airport, but the structure and equipment could be dated back to the 1950's.

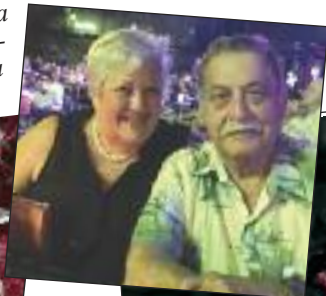
No one violated the 50-cigar limit per person rule, no contraband rum, and no CUCs were confiscated. CUC or Cuba Convertible Currency trades at about 87 U.S. cents for every 1.00 CUC as opposed to the peso which is 24 pesos to the dollar.

It is reported that the Cuban CUC will soon be phased out to give way to the more convertible peso.

In closing, no disparagement is made or intended toward the Cuban people. They appear to be doing the best they can under a governmental regime that has placed them in a Twilight-Zone-like environment looking from the inside out.

Every person should see what Communism has wrought to our neighbors to the south. Travelers should not be bedazzled by anecdotal opulence but instead experience the harsh realities that face Cubans every day. One extended visit will quickly reinforce your faith and support in Capitalism.

**DAY TWO:** The day ended with a delicious meal at a local restaurant, the group boarded classic convertibles of the 1950s to take in a show at the Tropicana celebrating its 80th anniversary.



**DAY TWO:** Rotarians tour took a somber trip to Necropolis Cristobal Colon; second largest cemetery in the Western Hemisphere



Maria and her husband Jesus Mendez in Cuba's largest cave.



Members of the group took time out to enjoy the popular tourist spots.



Fruit stand along the side of road.



Little Leaguer eating Moon Pie during exhibition game.



Ravdel, a local farmer, explains the farm to table approach used in Cuba.



Sam Adams enjoys time spent with one of the Little League players.



Political signs litter the entire island.



Streets of Trinidad.

**for a Final Glimpse of Cuba turn to page 9B**

# Spring is in the Air ... Sit Back, Relax, and have some Fun!

**THEME: CANDY**

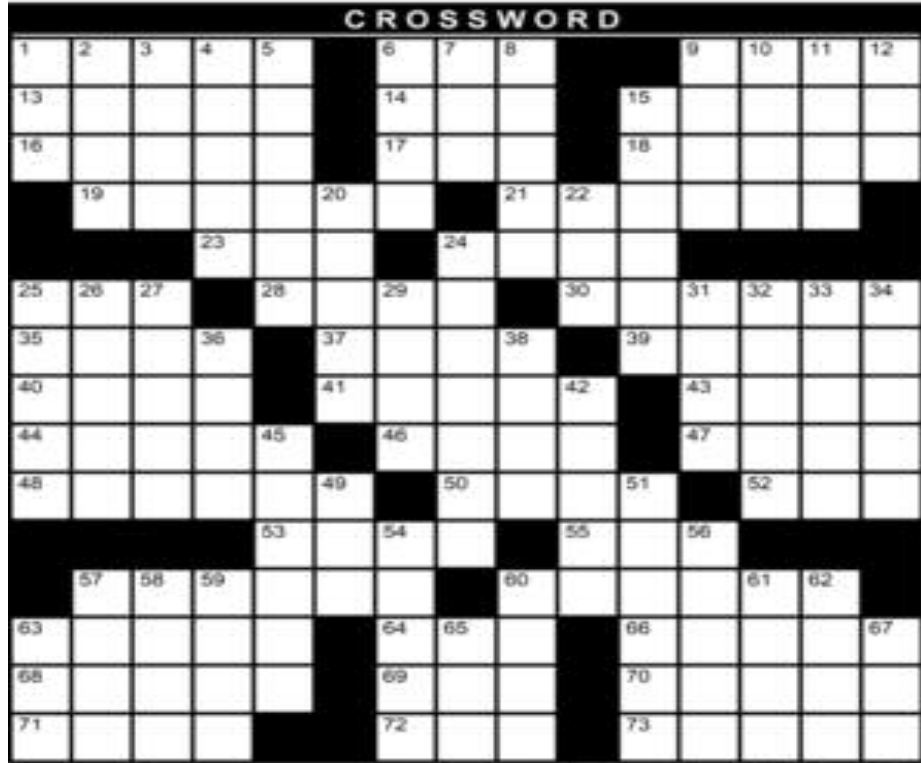
**ACROSS**

1. Unfathomably deep chasm
6. Lawyer group
9. Factoid
13. Non-flat area
14. Loquacious person's gift
15. Member of clergy
16. Kitty sounds
17. Mesozoic one
18. All thumbs
19. \*Who's Pieces?
21. \*Life \_\_\_\_
23. Comic book cry
24. Evening in Roma
25. Boar's mate
28. Bank deposit
30. Actress Ali or singer Tim
35. Flying saucers
37. Yeahs' opposers
39. One of the Muses
40. Ancient region of western Europe
41. \*Sweet bear
43. In a little while, old-fashioned
44. Like a neon sign
46. Fashion's "New Look" inventor
47. Weasel's cousin
48. Cash in credit card points, e.g.
50. "Good grief!"

52. The Old Man's turf
53. Tucked in
55. Sine \_\_\_\_ non
57. \*\*"Gimme a break" bar
60. \*Egg with a surprise
63. Southwestern hut
64. Step on it
66. Small Asian ungulate
68. What radiology and biology have in common
69. Chihuahua's cry
70. a.k.a. Ernest?
71. Japanese money, pl.
72. Blitzed
73. Industrious

**DOWN**

1. Similar to an adder
2. View from a moving train
3. Yesteryear
4. Shopping \_\_\_\_
5. Creates disorder
6. Forever and a day
7. \*Hershey made the first American milk chocolate one
8. Belittle
9. Have supper
10. Tennis serving whiz
11. Memorial Day solo
12. "The \_\_\_\_ of Racing in the Rain"
15. Fast and lively
20. Increasing
22. Location of ulna
24. Hindered
25. \*Principal candy ingredient
26. Allowed into a bar, e.g.
27. Past tense of will
29. Glorify
31. SI unit of mass
32. Raja's wife, pl.
33. Do penance
34. \*Famous fictional bar
36. \_\_\_\_ gin



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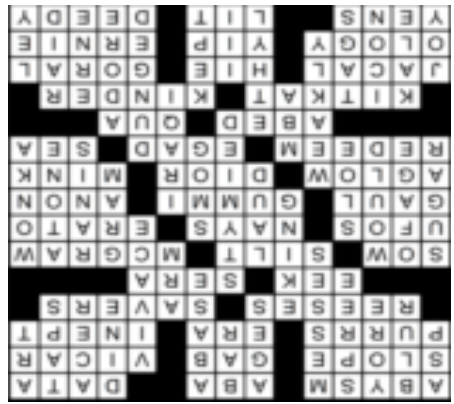
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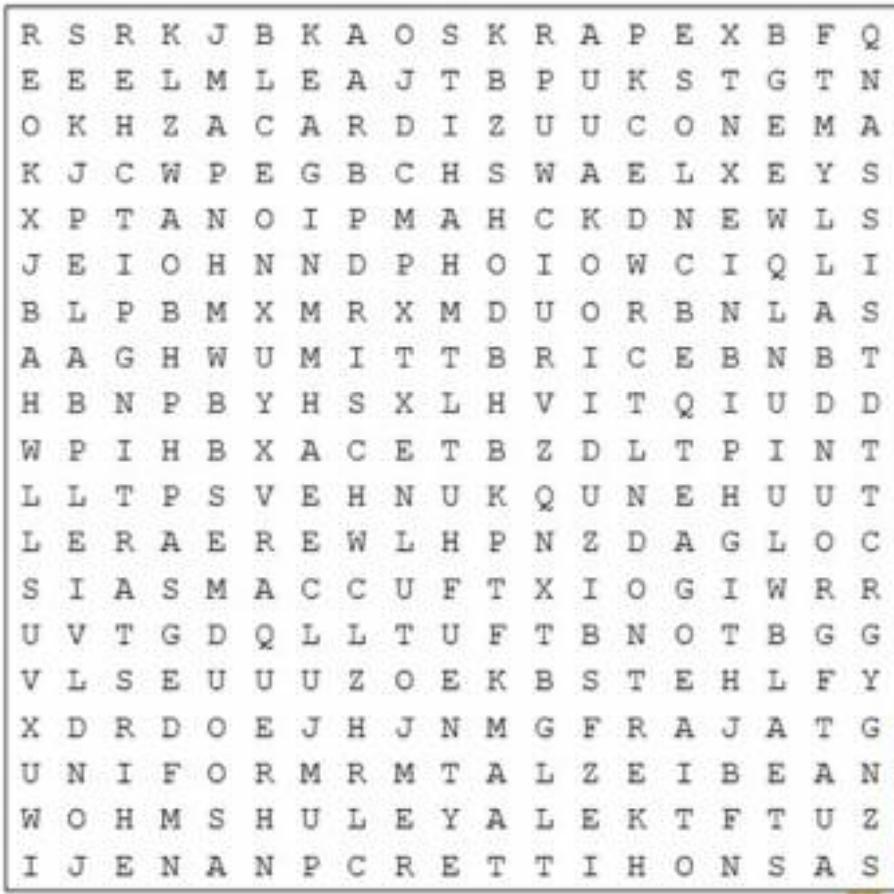
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38. Smoke plus fog
42. Baghdad resident
45. Not strongly
49. CEO's deg.
51. Fertilized
54. C2H5
56. "J" \_\_\_\_ by #46 Across
57. Green superfood
58. Desktop picture
59. Facebook photo links
60. Not disregarded, as in a promise
61. Marine eagle
62. Surprise at a speakeasy
63. \*Almond-induced state
65. Cardinal 3
67. Bovine hangout



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- |               |             |                  |
|---------------|-------------|------------------|
| ASSIST        | GROUND BALL | PARK             |
| AT BAT        | HELMET      | RUN              |
| BUNT          | HITS        | SAVES            |
| CARD          | LEAGUE      | SCORE            |
| CHAMPION      | LINEUP      | STARTING PITCHER |
| CLUB          | LOSE        | STEAL            |
| DECK          | MITT        | TAG              |
| DOUBLE HEADER | NINE        | THROW            |
| FIRST         | NO-HITTER   | UNIFORM          |
| FOUL          | OUT         | WALK             |

## Final Glimpse of Cuba

continued from page 9A



Sam addressing the crowd as coach interprets.



Glimpse of a home and rural life.



Off the coast of Cuba near Trinidad.



The group enjoyed scenery by horseback.



Cuba's capital building in Havana is a beautiful sight by night.

Local farmers gather tobacco by hand.



Maria has the inaugural dinner of a new restaurant with Chef Gabo. A step toward entrepreneurship for small business in Cuba.

Maria Mendez and Sam Adams.