

Inside Tequesta ...

*Connecting our Past to our Present
- One Story at a Time*

Michele Downs
Local Retired Journalist



Michele Downs: Small Town, Big Stories

Michele's journey began in Long Island, New York, but Florida quickly became home. She moved to Singer Island in 1972, relocated to Jupiter in 1982, and finally settled in Tequesta in 1986. She is married, has three children, and is the proud grandmother of four.

Michele attended Ithaca College and came to Florida one summer with her college roommate, she never looked back. In 1973–74, the two sold cookware door-to-door. One day, they met a civil engineer who showed them a master plan for Florida. Michele still remembers that map. Over the years, she has watched Florida transform dramatically—geographically and otherwise.

When Michele first arrived in Tequesta, she recalled there were very few children. However, there was a summer camp held in the recreation building, which was then owned and operated by JTJC (Jupiter Tequesta Junior Citizens).

Michele's writing career has opened many doors. She contributed to the local radio station, the Jupiter/Tequesta Chamber of Commerce, and the Loxahatchee Journal, which was later purchased by the Courier Journal. She covered Jupiter Town Hall and Council meetings—events she remembered as “so boring” where “no one could seem to make a decision!” Still, she faithfully reported the proceedings. Her attention to detail didn't go unnoticed—commissioners thanked her for her accuracy.

Eventually, she became the society editor at the Journal, a role that took her to many social events. One of her favorites was the Pink and White Ball, held at the site where the Jupiter Medical Center now stands—then the Palm Beach/Martin County Medical Center.

Over her 45-year writing career, Michele saved many of her articles, although the physical papers are now deteriorating. To preserve them, she's taken photos of her work. She recently helped the History Committee identify someone from the archives—T. Elbert Clemmons—whom she had written about in the early 1980s.

When asked about changes in the Village, Michele noted the positive growth in family-friendly events, like the Easter Egg Hunt hosted by the Fire Department. Still, she misses old businesses that gave Tequesta its charm, like Goodner's Variety Store, Kmart, and the original Publix. She feels that the Village has lost a bit of its small-town feel.

One of her fondest memories includes the Christmas lighting ceremony at the old Publix Plaza on Tequesta Drive, where Santa arrived in an RV. She also reminisced about the fashion shows hosted by Kiddie Kastle, a children's apparel store, at what is now the Jupiter Beach Resort.

Michele is deeply rooted in the community and says with a smile, "I'm so happy Tequesta is my home—and I'd prefer not to cross the bridge if I can help it!"