



people would come to the property just to see the whale, or see where the whale had been. We got phone calls from all over, and emails from as far as Europe. News and TV shows showed up to do interviews too!"

Though the whale in the pool was just one small part of the history of Islander, the hotel itself is right in the middle of history. Around 2011, Curry decided to build a museum, around the same time Islander Bayside, townhomes on the water a few miles down the road, was purchased. The goal of the museum was to share the History of the Keys. The museum

presented the Keys in a new way, from the perspective of the families and people that lived it. Long standing Keys Families brought in actual artifacts to add. "The museum is designed to go through time. From the Native Americans, to the treasure ships, through the hurricanes, and more. It's

a lot of information, but an interesting and unique place. They've also added an aquarium, and the building has a beautiful theater room upstairs too," says Shannon of the Florida Keys History & Discovery Center. Completed in 2013, the building also holds a kitchen on the lower level, for catering events both at the Resort and the museum.

Along with the museum, the property of Islander holds historic value as well. Visitors to the property might have noticed the massive 4,100 lb. anchor resting on the beach. This impressive bit of history is from the 1733 treasure

ship El Capitana, that ran aground and sank with a fleet of 22 ships when a hurricane hit on July 14th, 1733, just off present-day Islander Resort. Art McKee, a famous keys diver and treasure hunter, found this anchor, two cannons also on site, and lots of gold and silver, when he discovered the wreck in 1948.

Islander Resort, with its rich histories, thrived under the new renovations, and it was smooth sailing for many years until 2017, when Irma hit the islands.

"Irma was heartbreaking," said Shannon. "What it did to the property. It changed us, which ended up being in a good way. Pretty much all the way to the lobby received water. I stayed nearby for the storm, and came down three days after the storm. It took a while to even get to the beach. The sand from the beach was in our pools, and the rooms were a mess. We couldn't believe it, and being a local, even I thought the storm would turn."

"As we slowly started talking to people and assessing damages, our General manager asked us to go to certain areas to get an idea of what was going on. Every room was unbelievable. We went into Bonefish, and there was so much seaweed you couldn't see the back door. The lobby, when we arrived, had the front doors open, and you couldn't see the floor for all the iguanas. Pre-

