



Alligators in B-Flat: Improbable Tales from the Files of Real Florida (Florida History and Culture)

Jeff Klinkenberg

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“Jeff Klinkenberg is the ghost orchid of Florida nonfiction; an observer who prefers swamps and shadows to sunshine banalities; a prose writer of distinction whose roots seek out, then elegantly entwine, that which is fine and funny, outrageous and rare about our beloved state. *Alligators in B-Flat* is a virtuoso performance, and proves, once again, that Klinkenberg is among our finest writers.”—Randy Wayne White

“You read this fine writer and you stare with him into the canals for the dark shape of a manatee and listen for rumors of alligators and stand over the grave of a green snake in the yard in mourning. This is a writer who has never forgotten any of the mystery of this mysterious place, who never allowed his paradise to be paved over in concrete, at least inside his heart, and I could read him all day.”—Rick Bragg

“If Jeff Klinkenberg isn’t careful, he might give journalism a good name.”—Carl Hiaasen

“No one captures the old, secret Florida, the Florida of the swamps and forests where alligators and panthers rule, like Klinkenberg does. He uses his formidable reportorial skills to get fantastic (often hilariously funny) stories which belie the ghastly six-lane, strip-mall, gated-community, golf-course, air-conditioned, theme-parked Nature-wrecking Florida that most of its citizens know. Almost everything Klinkenberg writes is a public service as well as an enriching and educating experience.”—Diane Roberts, author of *Dream State*

Florida is a civilized place with eighteen million residents and all of the modern amenities one might expect: fine universities, art museums, world-class restaurants, and luxury accommodations. It is also home to panthers, bears, rattlesnakes, and alligators. In this collection of essays about Florida culture—the things that make Florida “Florida”—Jeff Klinkenberg sets his sights on the contradictions that comprise the Sunshine State.

With a keen eye for detail and a lyrical style, Klinkenberg takes us meandering through the swamps and back roads of Florida, stopping to acquaint us with the curious and kooky characters he meets along the way. These sometimes hilarious, sometimes reminiscent stories are as strange and mesmerizing as the people inhabiting this wacky peninsula. Klinkenberg is a journalist who conveys a deep fondness for his state and the curiosity behind his ongoing explorations in each story. Who else would engage a symphony orchestra tuba player to determine if bull gators will thunderously bellow back in a low B-flat during mating season (they do, but they only respond to that pitch).

Readers will join Klinkenberg as he roams through the twisted roots of past and present, describing a beautifully swampy place that is becoming increasingly endangered. The traditional ways of the scallop shuckers, moss weavers, and cane grinders in his stories are now threatened by corporate greed, environmental degradation, and mass construction. From fishing camps and country stores to museums and libraries, Klinkenberg is forever unearthing the magic that makes Florida a place worth celebrating. Join him

in contemplating Florida, both old and new, a place that is as quirky and enigmatic as it is burgeoning.

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Gary Williams:

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