

## A tale of Stuart's Ricou and Hartman historic families featured at Stuart Heritage program

Jennifer Whiting, a member of the Treasure Coast community. This story is neither endorsed by nor affiliated with this site.

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Speaker Ricou "Rick" Hartman answers a question from the audience during his presentation, "How a Fisherman's Grandson Became a Cowboy", at the November 8 Stuart Heritage meeting. More than 100 residents filled the Stuart City Hall Commission Chambers for the evening's program.

**STUART** — On the heels of Martin County's Historic Preservation month activities in October, the Stuart Heritage group hosted a program on November 8 about the unique history of the Ricou family, which was instrumental in the formation of early Martin County. More than 100 residents packed the Stuart City Hall Commission Chambers for the evening program, "How a Fisherman's Grandson Became a Cowboy."

Speaker Ricou "Rick" Hartman of Hartman Real Estate gave a rare glimpse into Stuart's history through the lives of the Ricou family, with good-natured assistance from his older

sister Karen Hartman-Malfregeot. A local commercial and acreage real estate broker, Ricou Hartman is a traditional country man, widely known for not only his familiarity with the Treasure Coast, but the history of our natural lands dating back to the 1800's. Through his stories, Hartman brought to life the heritage of Martin County's rich natural resources, from the family's historic fishing business to their recent ranching operations.

"The evening was an opportunity to have our town's rich history spring to life through the telling of one family's own stories passed down through the generations," commented Stuart Heritage President Mary Walton-Jones. "We couldn't be more delighted that Rick shared his family's stories with our group."

On Hartman's maternal side, R.R. Ricou owned a large part of Florida's thriving fishing industry in the early 1900's, with eleven fish houses from Cape Canaveral to Key West. R.R. Ricou and Henry Flagler were good friends, even partnering together 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.

When local author and historian Sandra Henderson Thurlow, who was also one of the event organizers, asked Hartman to speak, he was skeptical that people would be interested in having him tell his story. "As a fourth generation Floridian, I'm proud of my family's heritage and roots in Martin County," said Hartman. "It was surprising and heartening to see such a large group of people interested in hearing about our family history. My wife and I love this community and are thrilled that our children are also able to make Martin County their home and carry on that legacy."

Stuart Heritage's next event will be held December 10, as they celebrate the long-anticipated Stuart Heritage Museum Grand Re-opening featuring new exhibits and artifacts. For more information call (772) 220-4600, email [stuartheritage1@yahoo.com](mailto:stuartheritage1@yahoo.com), or visit <http://www.stuartheritagemuseum.com>.

#### About Rick Hartman and Hartman Real Estate

Ricou "Rick" Hartman, 60, is a native of Martin County and co-owner of Hartman Real Estate, Inc. He is active in the community, serving as member of the Board of Directors of the Martin County Taxpayer's Association, the Rivers Coalition and the Stuart/Martin County Chamber of Commerce. He also serves on the Florida Cattlemen's Association Private

Lands & Environmental Committee and the Realtor Association of Martin County's Government Affairs Committee. Rick and his wife Janet live in Palm City, and have three children and four grandchildren.

Hartman Real Estate is a generationally owned and operated real estate company, specializing in commercial and industrial property and land tracts. When Ralph Hartman Jr. founded the firm in 1959, he was passionate about integrity and accountability, a legacy that continues as a core value of Hartman Real Estate today. For more information, contact (772) 287-4690 or [ricoue51@hotmail.com](mailto:ricoue51@hotmail.com).

#### About Stuart Heritage

Stuart Heritage, Inc., a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, was formed in 1988 to rediscover and memorialize the history and architecture of the Stuart and Martin County area through the preservation of artifacts and writings, and to make available to the public the history of the community's pioneering and founding families. Programs featuring historic Stuart and Martin County are held on the second Tuesday of every month. Visit <http://www.stuartheritagemuseum.com> for more information.

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