

# Koreshan Unity's Horne is someone worth meeting

**H**istory buffs and culinary artists who attend the Koreshan Unity's Solar Festival at 10 a.m. Saturday at the Koreshan Historic Site in Estero should try to meet **Evelyn Luettich Horne**.

Those of you who're lucky enough to find Horne, the Koreshan Unity's culinary artist, should spend some time chatting with her.

If you don't find her, make sure you hear her speak about life with the Koreshans at the 11 a.m. dedication of the newly restored Founders House.

She's always delighted to share some of her magical memories — such as her chats with **Thomas Edison, Henry Ford, Marjorie Stoneman Douglas, Leonard Bernstein** and **John Pennekamp**.

Horne, who has been the Koreshan Unity's "Girl Friday" since 1940, is described as "living history" by many area residents.

According to Horne, life's greatest gift to her has been the memories she has of special people and places — especially the Utopian settlement of Koreshan, which was founded on the banks of the Estero River in 1894 by



**CLOSE UP** *Oct. 15, 1992*

**BUNNIE NICHOLS**

**Cyrus R. Teed**, a charismatic religious visionary.

Saturday's festival is being held to commemorate Teed's 153rd birthday.

Horne said her early childhood memories include things such as chats with Edison every Sunday, getting a dime from Ford for Christmas, playing at mouth-watering Koreshan fish fries on Fort Myers Beach and eating delicious biscuits with the area's most famous pioneer, **Grandma Johnson**.

Her later memories, she said, are equally

special — learning to bake in the Koreshan bakery, serving dinner to Douglas in the settlement's dining room, meeting Pennekamp during his visit to the highly cultural community, talking to Bernstein at the unity's Rising Tide Cottage on Fort Myers Beach, studying horticulture with **Hedwig Michel** — the last Koreshan, and of course, the annual celebrations such as the Solar Festival.

"Friends and family came from far and near for the Solar Festivals," Horne said. "Grown-up Koreshan children always came for a visit during this grand celebration to see life-time friends they grew up with."

Horne said she still prepares culinary creations from the Koreshan's original festival recipes for delights such as seagrape jelly, guavas and dumplings, batter-fried redfish, applesauce fruit cake and key lime pie.

This Saturday, she said, festival-goers will be able to sample ginger and sugar cookies and other refreshments made from these historic recipes.

Horne said her priceless memories also include her relatives, who played an important part in the area's history, especially at the Koreshan settlement.

She said one of her grandfathers, **Antonio Fernandez**, was an emissary from a Portuguese church who came to Mound Key in 1889 with his wife, Mary, and three daughters to provide religious guidance to fellow settlers, but ended up becoming a fisherman to survive.

"My other grandfather, **Carl Luettich**, met and heard Teed speak in 1893 in San Diego," Horne said. "He followed Teed back to Chicago and joined the Koreshan Unity to help plan a Utopian community in Estero. He was in the second group of Koreshans who came to Estero in 1894 from Chicago."

Soon after his arrival, she said, he moved to Mound Key with his wife, Rose, and son Charles to become the fisherman for the Koreshan settlement.

The Koreshans' fishing fleet was based on Mound Key, Horne said, and most of it was given to the state by the unity as part of the Koreshan State Historic Site.

"My father, Charles, also a fisherman, married Dora Fernandez, Antonio's daughter, in 1913 and left the Koreshan family," Horne said. "They bought a 40-foot

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houseboat and docked it on the south side of Mound Key."

Horne was born Aug. 11, 1922, aboard the houseboat.

"My father became the fishing guide for the Estero Inn, which burned long ago, and also pursued his interest in plants," she said.

"When I was 10, Edison started coming to our home on Sundays to talk to my father about botany. He had beautiful white hair and a warm personality. He always held my hand when he talked to me."

Her father, she said, still spent every summer fishing Estero Bay and her whole family stayed with him on the houseboat. Horne, who has two large greenhouses at her Estero home, said she developed her life-long interest in botany from her summers on Mound Key.

"Things really grew there," she said. "The settlers planted many rare fruit trees. We took nature walks on the island that taught me about plants, animals, shells and birds. It was a fascinating place to grow up."

According to Horne, a college-educated home economist, her life-long interest in cooking also began on Mound Key.

"As a child, I knew one of the area's most famous pioneers and best cooks, Grandma Johnson," Horne said. "Her husband, Frank, was the first modern settler to homestead Mound Key in 1891. I used to sit in her window and watch her cook. She was always ready to feed visitors a fantastic dinner."

Grandma Johnson was called one of the most interesting of Lee County's pioneers in a 1906 edition of the Koreshan Unity's "American Eagle."

"After I graduated from Fort Myers High School in 1940, Allen Andrews, editor of the "American Eagle," asked me to help with the Koreshan Solar Festival," Horne said. "I've been working for the unity ever since. Before the unity donated the settlement to the state, I worked in its general store, dining room, nursery and gardens and helped with social events."

"I was friends with 50 Koreshans and helped care for the last five during their final years, she said. "It was the least I could do to repay those loving people. They gave me an incredible education and my best memories."

— *Bunnie Nichols is a News-Press columnist.*