

## Good Life

# 'My Southern Soul' captures 35 years of Panhandle beaches

By Deborah Wheeler

debbie\_wheeler@link.freedom.com

"My Southern Soul" is an exhibition of photography spanning 35 years by artist Nicki Huggins. All were taken within 100 miles of County Road 30A, an area she calls "heartbreakingly beautiful."

The show is at WaterSound resort July 6-8 and is hosted by Pelican Realty.

Huggins is a native of Pensacola but has lived in Los Angeles for the past 30 years. There, she gained recognition as a TV producer.

She speaks lovingly of her "charismatic and handsome" dad, John Huggins, who was a charter boat captain in Pensacola in the 1960s. He wrote for Field and Stream and traveled over the northern United States promoting Florida's Gulf Coast.

"He built the first dock in Pensacola and it's still standing. I grew up on the beach and in his boat," said Huggins, places she used as vantage points for practicing her love of photography beginning at

age 10 with her Brownie camera.

Huggins graduated from Gulf Breeze High School, a town where her mother still lives.

She was the only woman in Florida State University's first film class.

She landed a job with a film company in Tallahassee and worked for the Democratic National Committee doing commercials for Reuben Askew, who was running for governor.

In Atlanta she worked on the film "Macon County Line" and established L.A. contacts.

Motherhood prompted a switch to TV production so she wouldn't have to travel.

About 10 years ago, she began collecting vintage Glider Queen outdoor furniture and is now one of the top three collectors in the country, a collection of the steel and aluminum furniture originally produced in America from 1919 - 1960.

"When I first started collecting them, people were throwing them in the trash. Now I get 1,500 e-mails a month about

them. It was the first piece of American designed outdoor furniture. We can't make them any more," she said.

Her vintage furniture Web site is [www.retropatio.com](http://www.retropatio.com).

Huggins is featured in the summer issues of Renovation Style and Culture and Leisure. Her work has been published in Los Angeles Times Home, Nashville At Home, Met Home, Coastal Living, Florida Travel and Life, Portico, and Outdoor Americana.

Regardless of her passion for antique gliders and TV production, Huggins said photography is her first love.

The WaterSound exhibit includes prints from up and down the coast dating to 1971, as well as Blountstown, DeFuniak Springs, Freeport and Hogtown Bayou, in black and white and color.

The show is at Compass Point II unit 212 with an opening reception July 6, from 4 - 8 p.m. It continues July 7 from 11 a.m. - 4 p.m. and July 8, from 11 a.m. - 4 p.m. Enter through the main gate at 6652 E. County Road 30A.



This infrared image by Nicki Huggins shows the approach of Hurricane Katrina. (Photograph courtesy of Nicki Huggins)