

THE KEYS

PLANTS FOR SALE
KEEPING THE KEYS GREEN



Maria Gargus waters palm trees Wednesday at a tradeplant nursery on U.S. 1 across from Key West Golf Course on Stock Island. The nursery has hundreds of Homestead-grown plants, from shrubs to trees, for sale.

Man riding scooter is killed in crash with turning SUV

Fatality highlights debate on safety

KEY WEST — A 51-year-old Ormond Beach man was killed Wednesday when the scooter he was riding collided with a sports utility vehicle on North Roosevelt Boulevard.

Police say Chester Kowalski was in the right lane of North Roosevelt when a southbound white SUV turning left into the Key West Welcome Center collided with him.

Kowalski, who worked for a local contractor at the Key Cove development, was run over by the vehicle and died at the scene, police say.

Police did not release the name of the Ohio man who was driving the sports utility vehicle.

Hours after the 1:20 p.m. accident, police investigators snapped photographs and inspected the vehicles involved in the collision, which started traffic for more than four hours on the north end of Key West.

Detectives were still trying to piece together the accident late Wednesday and had not pressed charges in the case, said Key West Police Department spokeswoman Cynthia Edwards.

News of the accident was not a big surprise to locals, who have long debated the safety of scooters on Key West's elongated and narrow streets, particularly at the congested "triangle" where U.S. 1 meets North Roosevelt.

Less than four months ago, a 27-year-old tourist was killed when she accidentally spun out on her rented scooter and was thrown under the wheels of a pickup truck on Old Town.

Between Jan. 1 and Oct. 19, 1999, the Key West Police Department recorded 98 scooter crashes, one of them fatal and two resulting in critical injuries. More recent figures were unavailable, but they are believed to be similar to the 1999 statistics, Edwards said.

Other refugees deny knowledge

Cuban migrant found dead in waters off Marathon last week may have been brutally murdered during an altercation with alien-smugglers at sea, the deceased man's Miami relatives said Wednesday.

That's just one of the theories that authorities and family members are considering in the mysterious death of Nelson Zayas Mayo, 35, whose severely bruised body was identified Tuesday by several Cuban-American relatives.

"We don't know what to believe anymore, but we've got to get to the bottom of it," WFLA Channel 10 cameraman Sergio Pention said of his cousin's suspicious death, which is under investigation by the FBI. "Until we get some answers, we're thinking the worst."

Although FBI and Border Patrol agents have not "positively determined" that Zayas was among a group of 15 Cubans dropped off by smugglers near Marathon on Friday, they have not ruled out a possible connection and seem to be concentrating on that scenario — perhaps because the other arrivals had not been identified when they were, one with a broken jaw and broken ribs.

Two women were treated at Fisherman's Hospital in Marathon.

GROUP'S DENIAL

Jim Orgeck, a spokesman for the Border Patrol in Miami, said the agency had not made a connection between Zayas and the group, which denies knowing Zayas. Two other groups arrived in the Keys on Friday — at Islamorada about 7 a.m. and 10 off Card Sound Road near Key Largo about 10 a.m.

"There's no evidence he was on any of those boats," Orgeck said Wednesday.

But FBI agents, who are also investigating because Zayas' death could be a crime on the high seas, interviewed only two groups — the 15 migrants who were dropped off by Marathon and the group of 23 found near Key Largo.

FBI spokeswoman Judy O'Connell said they still had not "positively determined" that Zayas came with the

Cuban migrant, however, were extensive, according to Arturo Gótz, a Cuban activist who lives in Key West and was with family members when they identified the body. He has bruises on his head, on his legs on his hands, on his chest, on his back.

Dr. Zhaning Li, Monroe County associate medical examiner who did the autopsy on Zayas, said Wednesday he could not comment on it because the FBI had ordered him not to release information.

Cobo said Wednesday that Zayas — who had been in the water for approximately 10 hours — had \$70 in his pocket, along with his identification and a piece of handwritten paper that apparently had instructions for him upon his arrival and a phone number to call.

"It was illegible. The water had blurred the writing," Cobo said.

SMUGGLING THEORY

Authorities believe Zayas, who smuggled in, as was the group of 15 that were found Friday morning on Sister's Island off Marathon. They said they had paid \$2,000 each to get to South Florida.

While police are offering little information about their investigation, Pention said he and family members have their suspicions about what may have happened to Zayas, who reportedly did not tell relatives that he was fleeing Cuba.

Some say Zayas may have arrived in the United States already dead, possibly from injuries sustained a day earlier in a fight with smugglers or from rough seas, and was dumped overboard on the boat nearest shore, said Pention, who last saw his cousin 10 years ago during a news-gathering trip in Cuba.

Others suspect Zayas — who was well dressed and educated and ran a factory in Cuba — may have climbed with the other migrants on board for unknown reasons and was killed.

Pention is not surprised that no one has claimed to have come with his cousin. "When you cram a bunch of people on a boat for that long, it's everyone for themselves. No one's going to protect you from anyone."

KEYS CALENDAR

TODAY

- Free Federal Aviation Administration safety seminar, 7 p.m. at Florida Keys Marathon Airport terminal. For details call Barbara at 299-8006.
- Florida Keys Discovery site lecture, The History of Key West and the Florida Keys, at 7:30 a.m. at Key West library auditorium.
- Florida Keys Council for People with Disabilities meeting, 10 a.m. at Marathon High School conference room. Public is welcome. For details call 292-4516.
- Parent to Parent support group for parents with children with disabilities, 6 to 7:30 p.m. Marathon Recreation Center, 33rd Street. For details call 292-9455, 877-988 or 732-6177.

FRIDAY

- Presentation at Key Colony Beach City Hall at 3 p.m. Master Gardener, Annette Hinder slide presentation Native Trees and Plants.

SATURDAY

- Free lecture on native plants at Home Depot in Marathon, 10 a.m. in the garden center. For details call 292-4501.
- Barton Memorial United Methodist Church women's rummage raffle and bake sale, 9 a.m. to noon at the church, mile marker 93. For details call 852-2581.

SUNDAY

- Marathon Business and Professional Women's Club seventh annual 5K run/walk on old Seaman Mills Bridge. Entrance fee is \$15 before Jan. 22, \$20 after. For details call 743-6457.

WEDNESDAY

- Free Key Largo Hammocks botanical slide talk lecture series, Astronomy, 7:30 to 8:30 p.m. at John Persekowski Oval Reef State Park visitors center. For details call 655-1555.
- McDowell Family Gospel Southern Style concert, 1:30 p.m. at Sunnyside Key Fun Resort and Marina in the clubhouse. Mile marker 38.

Marathon defeats Coral Shores 57-29

Center Lezcano leads team with record 23 points

that enabled them to capture a 2-2 lead after one.

Great Veronica Doughman, a junior, scored 10 points, while Lezcano added 8 in the period that saw the Dolphins use their press to create steals, resulting in an 11-0 run in the quarter.

"I was very pleased with the way our girls executed the press," said Dolphins head coach Theresa Knorr. "We still need some work in our backcourt, but we're heading in the right direction as the district get closer."

Defensively, Marathon recorded 13 steals. Doughman led the way with four, followed by three each from Trelis Jones, a senior, and Lezcano, who also grabbed a game-high 10 rebounds in the win.

At the break, Marathon led the Canes 18-6.

In the fourth, Coral Shores out-secured the Dolphins, 13-12, but it wasn't nearly enough.

With the win, Marathon improves its overall record to 10-5, and 5-2 in district play.

On Saturday, the Dolphins head north to play Westwood Christian at 1:30 p.m.

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