How to save a memory

By Verticus • www.miamivisionblogarama.blogspot.com

Y our heart quickens when you see her rising above the palm trees. The ocean breeze carries the smell of memory: jet fuel, salt air and the unforgettable, thrilling roar of Unlimited hydroplanes. You’re high up in the seats, shaded by the largest cantilevered concrete span in the world, watching Miss Budweiser with the legendary Dean Chenoweth at the wheel, winning the season opening race in the Unlimited Series.

It’s 1971 and everything was perfect at that one place and time. Time passes. The Miami Marine Stadium is now 45 years old. As you approach her from Rickenbacker Causeway you quickly discover this isn’t the kind of Memory Lane you want to drive on. You can see the graffiti a mile away. She’s been tagged from head to toe. It’s quite possible she’s been turned into the biggest repository of graffiti on the planet.

You park your car and slip through a chain-link fence. There are no guards. The doors to the public restrooms are missing on the ground floor. You walk into the eerie dark silence and see that the place has been ransacked. Every urinal and sink has been ripped from the walls, and what couldn’t be salvaged was thrown helter-skelter across the junk-strewn floor.

You exit into the daylight and enter the stadium itself. Graffiti greets you everywhere you turn. Every inch of this tomb to boat racing memories has been tagged. You’re surprised to see that most of the original seats are still there. They are tagged, and you wonder why.

Why? What happened?

The official reason for her neglect is 1992’s Hurricane Andrew. Hairline cracks were found in the roof and the city closed it down, fearing it was unsafe. Nothing was done to fix it. Sixteen years later, the roof still stands. In 2002, Miami Mayor Manny Diaz promised to fix it. He never did.

In June the city held a charrette for the community to get input on what to do with the site. Nothing was done to fix it. Sixteen years later, the roof is still unsafe. Nobody wants to fix it.

To petition for the restoration of the Miami Marine Stadium, please contact:

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