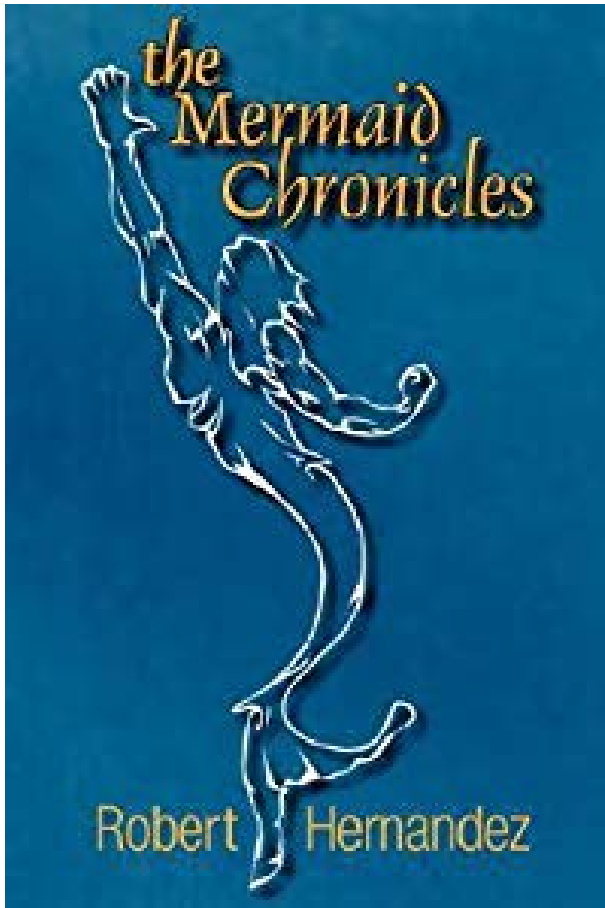


# The Mermaid Chronicles



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MYSTERY, MURDER AND ... MERMEN? In 2004, an onslaught of three hurricanes changed the course of a river in Northeast Florida, exposing a skeleton that had, for half a millennium, been hidden by the water and silt. Although similar to and certainly related, the bones weren't quite human. The chest cavity was too large. There was even evidence suggesting that the two lowest ribs formed a pair of slits. Other minor tweaks, here and there, added -fodder to the uniqueness of the find.

. And then there was . the tail. Fantastic as it may seem, the skeleton was clearly a merman! To confound the mystery further, both the skull and one arm exhibited evidence of blunt trauma that never healed. The creature had apparently been murdered. How did this aquatic being come to be? What did it look like? How did it behave? How had its existence been kept secret for so long? Who killed it? Are there more? To find the story behind this magnificent discovery, there had to be an investigation to determine just what happened five hundred years ago. Plowing for answers through historical records revealed an epic tale involving pirates, slavery, Indians, and mermaids that could only happen in the "Sunshine State." Robert Hernandez was born in Havana, Cuba. He and his family escaped Castro's dictatorship and, after enduring a really cold winter in Spain, settled in Miami. Graduating with a degree in Biology from the University of Miami, Robert married his best friend, Teresa, and moved to Tampa, teaching science while she attended medical school (and he

earned his Masters degree to pass the time). Robert and Dr. Teresa Hernandez have been together for twenty-two years (and counting). They spend most of their time following the exploits of their two amazing sons-Chris and Joey. After wandering all over the state, they have settled down in Ormond Beach, where they live in a long, skinny, weird house on the ocean. Mr. Hernandez is in his third decade of teaching science in Florida. He is currently (and will hopefully forever remain) at Mainland High School. He regularly kayaks along the Tomoka River and, while he is certain this story is a work of fiction, he occasionally probes the bottom with his oar .