

House for a beatnik no more: Kerouac's St. Pete home sells

BY PAUL GUZZO
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ST. PETERSBURG — For the first time in more than five decades, the St. Petersburg home at 5169 10th Ave. N is not directly linked to Jack Kerouac or his family.

Kerouac's family sold the late beatnik writer's retirement home on Friday for \$220,000 to a company that specializes in flipping houses.

There had been years-long negotiations between the family and a local non-profit that wanted to turn the 1,760-square-foot house into a writer's retreat dedicated to the *On The Road* author. But the group could not come up with the money in time.

So, it was sold to Flip Side, LLC.

"We haven't decided what we are going to do with it yet," said Frank Viggiano, president of Flip Side. "We might sell it. Turning it into a rental is always an option. And the nonprofit has already reached out to us. So, we will talk with them."

But Pat Barmore, president of the Jack Kerouac's House of St. Petersburg nonprofit trying to buy it, is losing hope that they can come up with the cash during what he said is a time of economic uncertainty due to the pandemic.

"We'll see what we can do," Barmore said. "It's hard right now. I'm worried they'll find a buyer immediately and we can't buy it now."

The house needs at least \$30,000 worth of work put into it, Viggiano said. "It's in pretty bad shape. The roof is leaking. Windows are busted out from people breaking in."

He bought it partly because it was Kerouac's retirement home, Viggiano said, but mostly because he considers "it in a real up-and-coming neighborhood."

Kerouac moved to St. Petersburg in 1964 with his third wife, Stella, and his mother.

They originally rented a place near the home and befriended the man who built most of the residences in the neighborhood. The builder meant to live in the



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The house at 5169 10th Ave. N was Jack Kerouac's home during his final years in St. Petersburg.



Times files

Kerouac may be best known for his 1957 novel *On the Road*.

three-bedroom, one-story house but got divorced and sold it to Kerouac.

Kerouac was 47 when he died from liver cirrhosis on Oct. 21, 1969, at St. Anthony's Hospital in St. Petersburg. His mother died in 1973 and his wife in 1990.

John Sampas, brother of Stella Kerouac and a resident of Connecticut, used the St. Petersburg home for vacationing from time to time but stopped visiting when age made regular

travel difficult.

At their request, a local nonprofit, Friends of the Jack Kerouac House, became the home's caretakers in 2013 and held fundraisers to pay for the upkeep.

Two years later, Sampas changed the locks but offered to sell the house to the non-profit for \$500,000.

On-again, off-again negotiations followed.

Sampas died in 2017 and passed the home on to his son, John Shen-Sampas, who was

eager to find a buyer.

Members of the Friends of the Jack Kerouac House then formed the Jack Kerouac's House of St. Petersburg charged with raising the funds to buy the home and turn it into a writer's retreat.

Shen-Sampas offered it to the nonprofit for \$300,000 but the group failed to raise the funds by the seller's imposed June 1 deadline. Shen-Sampas told the *Tampa Bay Times* via email he offered to loan the nonprofit up to \$200,000 through a seller's mortgage.

"They decided not to take my offer and kept trying to raise the money," he wrote. "However, as of now, I sold my house to an investor. So that's the end."

Barmore of the nonprofit said they appreciate Shen-Sampas' overture but did not take it because they cannot guarantee they will raise the money.

"We will remain hopeful," Barmore said. "Maybe an angel will fall out of the sky?"

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