

## HISTORY OF BRIAR CREEK by Howard Beeley

My name is Howard Beeley. It is September 16, 1998. Dorothy and I are sitting in our condo up in North Andover, Massachusetts. We are attempting to make this tape of the events that took place when the residents took over the park from the developer.

I want to start by saying we moved into the park in 1978, March the 21st. In 1980 there were five people on the Board of Directors. Warren Hughes the developer had three on and he appointed two others: Al Dettmer and Scotty Buchanan. They were on the Board when Warren told them in about a year we would take over the park, and we had better get a committee together to set up the park whatever way we wanted to run it.

They asked me if I would be chairman of the committee. Well I didn't know anything about it but I would take a crack at it. So I picked out five people. At first we had seven, but two dropped out. The first one I asked was Glen Keel, then Leon Warner, then Betty Guillame and the other two who dropped out made five, and myself made six. Then I got Harold Law to step in. So we proceeded to have a meeting. I asked them if any of them knew anything about what we were going to do to take over the park. They all said the same thing. None of them knew anything about it, but whatever we do we want to make sure that the residents are going to run it, and so that's what we did. I went to Warren and asked Warren if he could help us get started. He said only if we gave him a long contract and then we did not need a board of directors. He would run everything himself. I didn't want that and neither did the others. We wanted to run it ourselves. Then I said I'll go down to City Hall and see if someone down there can help us, because none of us really knew what we were doing.

But before I could get down there, that afternoon I was over the Clubhouse and there were some men over there playing pool, John Aiho, Ken Evans, Joe Costello, Mike Mckay and I think Warren Schmalix was the other one. John Aiho said to me, "Can I speak to you for a minute." I said "yes." We went over by the stage and he said, "Do you know what you are going to be doing?" I said "John, I have no idea what we're going to be doing. He said "well maybe I can help you. I know someone over at Clearwater who runs a condominium and he calls over to Tampa every time he has a problem. They seem to help him out and they have the answers for him. He said I'll talk with him and see if I can get him to give me the information so I can give it to you and maybe they can help you. So John did. A couple of days later, he called me up and he had it for me.

I proceeded to call Mr. McDowell, I think that was his name was. (I'm trying to remember all of this from seventeen years ago.) We made an appointment to go over to see him. We told him what we wanted. We were going to take over the park. The residents were going to own everything in it, the streets, the lights, the pool, the sewer, water, everything, and we want to run it ourselves. He said there is no such thing as a mobile home park in Florida where you can do that. We said well that's what we want to do. It's our property and we want to do it. He said it sounds to me that you want to run it like a condominium. He said if you can do this we'll start a condominium mobile home park. He said boy it will be the first one in Florida if you pull it off.

One stipulation Warren Hughes made was no mobile home unit could be White. He took our prospectus and made copies and he sent some to Tallahassee. He said he would know within a couple of weeks if they had approved it. He wrote a letter and told them what we wanted. Two weeks later he got an answer back. Good luck to us if we can do it, but they will stick by us. Then we said, "Now what are we going to do?" He said, "we'll follow a condominium program. The first thing you have to do is to get yourself a lawyer. Make sure it is someone who has nothing to do with contractors

or builders. From there you can get a management company, one that can help you set up a budget. Then you have to find out everything that you have, like lawn service, sewerage, water, and you have to get contracts with all these people. Okay, so we had something to start with now.

The first thing we did was to call lawyers. We asked them if they ever did business with contractors or builders, and they all said sure. We all got a big kick out of telling lawyers we couldn't use them. Finally we got hold of one over in Dunedin. Jim Anderson. He was one of the Sons of a representative on a board that governs rental mobile home park, and he could have no dealings with contractors. We got Jim out of his office. Jim said the first thing you have to do is to get a management company.

We started interviewing management companies. Every one of them said the same thing. "What do you want?" We said, "We want you to tell us what you can do for us." But they kept saying the same thing, over and over. "Well you tell us what you want and maybe we can work with you." Then we found one, Beda Management. They came in and said Well, this is what we can do for you." That's what we wanted -- someone who could do something for us. They took things upon themselves. They had a controller who was going to check with City Hall to find out how much water, sewer, garbage pickup went up every year for the last five years in order to help make out a budget. They did all that for us. They got that all set up for us. They had contracts made up for us and everything.

Then we had to get a lawn service. We started fishing around, and finally got a lawn service. Then we had to get the electric company because if we had the electric lights in here, we needed a contract with them. We had contracts with everyone. We had water, sewerage, garbage pickup, fire protection, police protection, electric company.

We had everything all set up, but the insurance. Now none of us knew anything about insurance either. By now, it was getting close to 1981. It was in the fall that I went to Ed McEvoy and asked him if he could help us. He said, "I'll do the best I can." He went looking around insurance companies, and lo and behold, Ed did it. He found us an insurance company, got the coverage and everything we needed. That was all set. Then Warren called up and wanted to know when we wanted to take over. He said the first week of March. He said I can give you either the 3rd, 4th, 5th or 6th of March. He said, "Pick a date, so I can mark my calendar." I said how about March the 4th -- it comes on a Wednesday. He said "Fine". Of course, that was my birthday. That's why I can always remember the day we took over.

The day came when we took over. Warren was there with his manager on the stage. We had had an election in January, and Dot Ross, Ed McEvoy and Tom Smith went into office. Dot Ross was chairman. We had three on the board and Warren only had two. Our lawyer and their lawyer were also on the stage. Dot Ross and Warren. They were signing papers back and forth and back and forth. In the meantime, the contractors were waiting for it to be official that we owned the park. Finally, everything was set. In the meantime, we were thinking, gee when they leave we won't have a full board. We took it upon ourselves to get Al Wetzel and Mel Ruwe to step in. They were there and knew what was going on. We briefed them. As soon as Warren and his manager Mike left, these two stepped in. They went in the back room for about five minutes. They came out.

Dot Ross was going to be the Chairman of the Board. Ed McEvoy was going to be the Treasurer, and (I believe) Al Wetzel was the Secretary. Everything went smooth. We were all happy because now WE OWNED THE PLACE' We had our own Board and everything was all set up. When they came back out, they signed all the contracts with these other companies. Everything was fine.

Two weeks later I got a call from Dot Ross. She was all excited. We just got a bill from the County for taxes for \$5,500 on the Clubhouse, the two laundries and the common areas. We had \$700 in the kitty. When the management company made out our budget, the budget was going to be \$47. They wanted to add on \$5. If we added on \$5 and had no big project coming for the next few years, we would have enough money in the kitty so that we wouldn't have to have an assessment. We thought that was a great idea. That was how we added to the \$700.

I went to Ed with this problem we had. He's the only guy I know who can solve these things. Ed said "Let me see what I can do." I have a few friends in the right places. Maybe I can do something." Two weeks later Ed called me and said, "Meet me at the Clubhouse and bring Dot Ross. I want to show you something." I called Dot and we went to the Clubhouse. Ed was there and he had some papers. Ed said, "Dot you are Chairman of the Board. I want you to sign these." The papers were to give us a title and a Non-Profit Organization stamp that Ed got for us, and we never have to pay taxes again. At that time they told us. "If you ever have to pay taxes and you pay them three times, you will lose this status." I don't know if that is still in effect or not, because over the years, things have been changing. But that's how we got the Non-Profit stamp. Ed McEvoy got it for us. He was great to this park, I'll tell you.

One other thing. The time they enlarged the kitchen, that was a big project. Enlarging the kitchen, buying all the new equipment and everything. Then one time they extended the stage. They brought the stage out, put an automatic curtain up, fans for the air conditioning, and that was great. Then they got a bingo board.

Everything seemed to be going good because we were making enough money to run everything. Then they built a shed out back to get the shuffleboard equipment out of the Clubhouse. That was built by Dave Spencer and Sam Nichols. Dave Spencer drew up the plans. They did a terrific job.

Everyone in the park has been great. They worked hard. We did a lot of work in the beginning to keep everything organized and I think it shows that with everyone working together, we can do an awful lot.

We have a heating system now for the pool and the Jacuzzi that was put in by Max Lorah. I think he drew up all the plans. He and Henry Kline and Stan Cunningham worked like dogs on that. They had a lot of help but they were the main ones. That takes care of all the heating of the pool and the water in the Clubhouse and the sprinkling of the lawns to keep the grounds looking nice. It was very good. I think everyone worked hard. Can't do much more than that. At the entrance where the big tree is, right now there is a planter with a stone wall all around it. There was nothing there -- just the tree and some dirt. Dave Regan and John Tumble built all that. John was on the Board of Directors. The stone was given to them from somewhere. They built that island and all the cement islands you see, or a circle around a tree. John and Dave built all those. That was another nice job they did. A lot of jobs like that were done around here.

I can remember the first time we had a breakfast at the Clubhouse. Joe Costello printed up all the tickets and we went house to house selling them. We sold 38 tickets. On the ticket it said from 8:00 to 10:00. By quarter to nine, we had served everyone. That's another thing that is unbelievable that it happened. Before we took over the park, we had to ask Warren for money to buy things like beads for the shuffleboard court. Joe Costello had the bright idea of running a dinner. Mike McKay got a bunch of spaghetti and we bought the things that went with it. We charged everyone \$2.00 a ticket. We served 78 people, which was a great thing. Then we had some money to spend on shuffleboard or whatever we wanted. We bought some new stakes and fixed some that were there.

These are just some of the things that happened.

(Transcribed by Claire Hull from tape recorded by Howard Beeley)