

Mary Stewart

CONTINENTAL:
its
CONCEPTION
and
CONTINUITY

A HISTORY OF
CONTINENTAL
COUNTRY
CLUB

by RUTH ZIMMER
BRENT FRY, *Research*

Sponsored by:
CONTINENTAL RESIDENT
LADIES CLUB

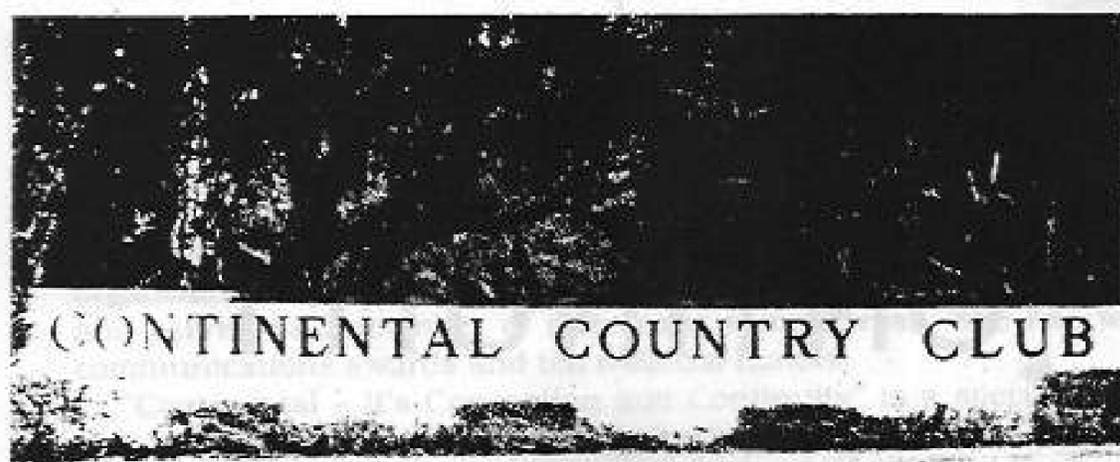


Photo by Dick Meek

1994

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About the Author

The Continental Resident Ladies Club is deeply appreciative to Ruth Zimmer, member and past president of CRLC, for her contribution of talent, expertise, and countless hours of work in order that this fine history might become a reality.

Ruth's qualifications for writing this book are extensive and include a career as a newspaper columnist, ghost-writer for three books, owner of a public relations business and author of the "Five Generations Cookbook," which won a first place award from the National Federation of Press Women in 1993.

Ruth is a life member of the Missouri Press Women, was the organization's president for two years, as well as holding other offices, and served as a member of numerous committees. She has won 35 communications awards and ten national honors.

"Continental - It's Conception and Continuity" is a special gift to all who have ever called Continental "home."

-The Continental Resident Ladies Club

When the 18th of
January, 1880, the
club was organized
and today they still

and in 1980, 1981 and 1982
the club was the first to
be organized in 1880.

FOREWORD

This is a labor of love by many people who have a sense of the importance of the past and how it evolved into the present. We hope you enjoy the history of the place you now call "home."

Please keep in mind that while we have tried to verify everything, still some of the tales are recollections, and since we sometimes remember things differently, you may disagree and remember the same incident as happening another way. Be Kind. Permission to use information, quotes and pictures was obtained from all contributors, who are listed at the end of the book.

In 1978, seven people put together a history of the pioneer Hester family and the property we now know as Continental Country Club. It was dedicated to the memory of **Frederick Cummins Hester, Jr.**, 1900-1978.

The account, from which we borrowed, was narrated by **Gladyce McDonald Hester** to **Paula Loyce Coggin** and **Carol Ann Alain**. Others involved were: **John Anketell**, photography; **Ed Alain**, composition; **Denis E. Coggin**, editor, and **A Starr King**, directional signs to the Champion Trees.

It was sponsored by **Continental Resident Ladies Club**, which was established to "preserve and protect natural beauty and nature of Continental." **CRLC** is again a sponsor of this updated history in 1994, to preserve and pass along the background and origins of CCC.

IN THE BEGINNING

The Story of Continental can best be understood by a brief glimpse into Florida's past, of which our history is an inextricable part. We can give credit or blame to Juan Ponce DeLeon, who discovered Florida on March 3, 1513, and claimed it for Spain. He was as muddled about where he was as Columbus had been in 1492. As one reader of Ann Landers' column wrote: "Christopher Columbus was the world's most remarkable salesman. He started out not knowing where he was going. When he got there he didn't know where he was, and when he returned, he didn't know where he had been. He did all this on borrowed money and managed to get a repeat order."

He must have been a role model for Ponce DeLeon, who thought he had found an island on which there was a miraculous Fountain of Youth. He didn't find that marvelous water, but that hasn't prevented modern explorers from coming to Florida seeking it, only now they are called "tourists" or "snow birds".

So lovely were the flowers and trees that Easter in 1513 that Ponce DeLeon named his find "Pacua Florida," meaning "The Feast of Flowers."¹

According to research done by Frank Slaughter, Wildwood businessman and historian, Florida came under British rule from 1763-1783 but returned to Spanish hands after the Revolutionary War.²

Florida was ceded to the United States in 1821. There were, at that time, two Floridas. East Florida had St. Augustine as its capital and West Florida chose Pensacola. The two were separated by 400 miles of wilderness.

In 1824, Tallahassee was named territorial capital. The peninsula up to Gainesville was Indian territory, which led eventually to the Indian War (1835-1842) as white settlers demanded more and more Indian land.

Nobody Here But Us Indians³

(We are fortunate to have the following contribution by the late Emmett Peter, Jr., historian and author of historical articles and columns).

"Before the white man came in the 1840s and 1850s, Lake and Sumter Counties were Indian country. Historian Elizabeth Geiger wrote in 1957: 'My brothers, skilled hunters and fishermen, explored the Lake Harris shore between Leesburg and Yalaha. They gently probed mounds

¹ Encyclopedia Americana.

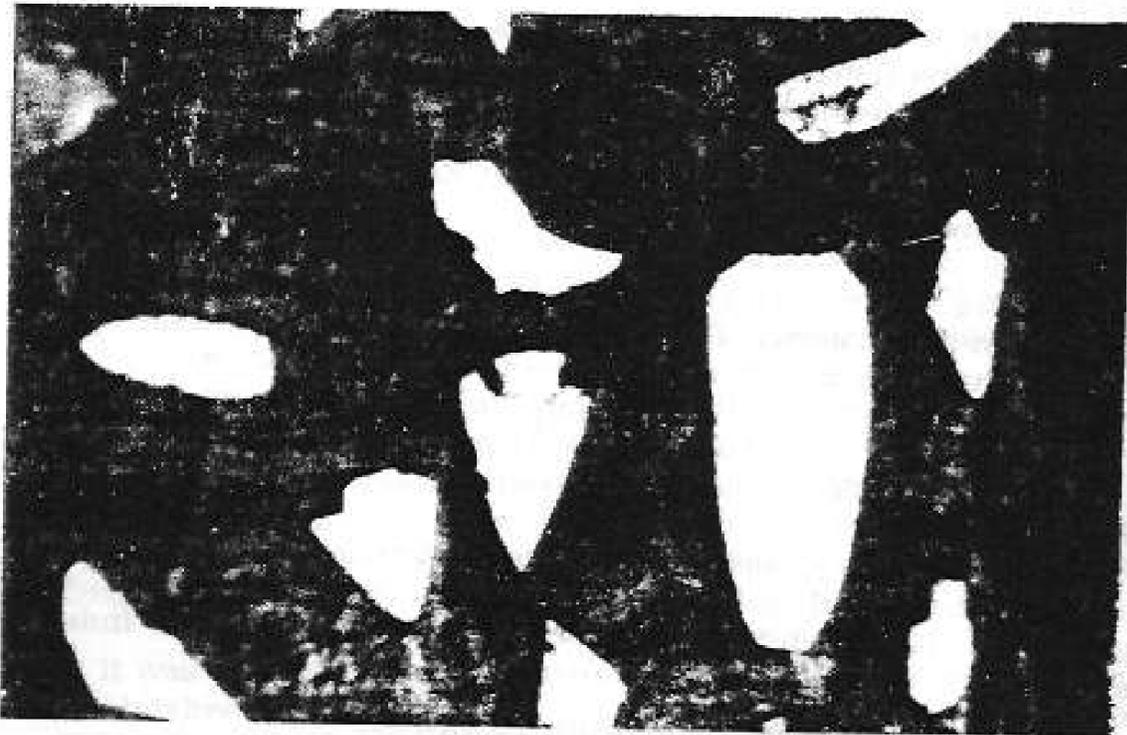
² Lecture notes by Frank Slaughter, speaking in February, 1983 to Continental Resident Ladies Club.

³ From the book, *Lake County Florida, A Pictorial History* by the late Emmett Peter, Jr., Contributing Editor to the Daily Commercial, published in September of 1994.

with a sounding rod, finding arrow and lance heads, and near Palatlahaha a perfect bowl with raised corn design.'

"Many Indians were Seminoles, breakaways from the Creek Nation, but the Lake Harris shore east of Leesburg was habitation for the Timucuan, a civilized tribe that had a written language, grew corn and fruit trees, built houses and traded with other tribes.

"Florida," the 1939 WPA guidebook, tells what tribesmen and tribeswomen wore: 'Clothes were for ornament. Men wore brilliant feather mantles, metal breastplates and leather breechclouts. The typical brave wore inflated fish bladders, dyed red, in his ears. An Indian woman wore a moss skirt and mantle and her hair was unbound.'



Part of the Hester collection of Indian arrowheads.
Photo loaned by the Hester family.

Florida Capital Should Have Been Here??

The late columnist, Norma Hendricks, shed further light on the Indians in our past history when she wrote: "Lake and Sumter Counties are well supplied with 'ghost towns,' though most of them were not towns but communities where a post office was required to have a name.

"Sometimes a post office was a box nailed to a tree or simply a dock where a lake boat dropped off the mail and people of the area came down and sorted through the letters to pick out their own and perhaps those of neighboring pioneers.

"Perhaps the old original 'town' of Okeehumpkee, where Continental and Sandalwood are located at the east end of Lake Okeehumpka, should have been the capital of Florida prior to 1835.

"That was where old Micanopy, chief of the Seminoles in this area, had his town with 600 houses, making it the biggest settlement anywhere in this part of Florida.

"Today, you may still find an arrowhead or a piece of sun-blued glass left over from that time, in wooded areas where ancient trees still living, looked down on activities of the tribe."⁴

There is an unconfirmed story that chiefs from a number of tribes met in a pow-wow to plan strategy for the Indian War. It is a fact that Major Dade (after whom Dade County is named) and 110 of his men were killed in December of 1835 just south of Bushnell.

The war ended with 4,000 Indians and Blacks being relocated to Arkansas. Mrs. Gladyce Hester said that some of the Indians owned Black slaves, and were among those given free land after Florida became a state in 1845.

The new state attracted settlers and veterans of the Indian War, mostly from Georgia and the Carolinas. In 1843, an area which is now Sumter, Lake and part of Orange counties became Sumter County.

The same year, a stage line was established from Jacksonville to Tampa, with a stop at Adamsville.⁵

"There was a lot of competition for the county seat in those days," Frank Slaughter said. "The courthouse was moved from Adamsville to Sumterville, to Leesburg and back to Sumterville in 1881. The courthouse burned in 1909, after which an election was held to decide if a new site would be Bushnell or Wildwood. Bushnell won by nine votes.

"Sumter County was mostly small farms where collard greens, corn, sugar cane, sweet potatoes, chickens and hogs were raised. It was considered too cold for citrus.

"The small farmer found it necessary to fence his farm because Florida was open range, as we had our own kind of wild west."⁶

⁴ From her column, "Homespun" published Monday, October 29, 1984 in the Daily Commercial.

⁵ Adamsville is a hamlet about two miles east of Coleman on County Road 468.

⁶ Lecture, Frank Slaughter.

The city of Wildwood was named by a telegraph linesman stringing new lines. He called his branch office in Monticello, and when asked where he was, he answered: "I don't know, but it's wild woods."

A shop and roundhouse were set up and Wildwood became a small town and thriving railroad center.⁷

Many of us, driving on 44A, admire a two-story typical early Florida "gingerbread" house. It was built by David H. Baker of Orange Home more than 100 years ago. Orange Home was the name given to a wide area, estimated at more

than 900 acres, which is the general area Continental now occupies. Later there was a village named Orange Home, a small community east of CCC which was platted, streets and sidewalks paved and water system installed. There were only three or four houses. Orange Home was built during the Florida land boom of the 1920s, but with the Great Depression it fell into disrepair and evidence of the failed project still remains.

In his lecture, Slaughter recalled that in the 1930s, the Florida Highway Patrol was organized and drivers' licenses were being sold without an examination. Another of his memories is of a convict camp between Wildwood and Oxford. Such camps were scattered around the state and housed young prisoners who maintained the roads. They wore stripes and there were "sweat boxes" for punishment, and those considered likely to escape wore leg irons.



Mr. and Mrs. Frederick Cummins Hester.

⁷ Community Information Guide, produced by the City of Wildwood.

The Hester Years

This is the story of Frederick Cummins Hester, Jr. and his wife, Gladyce McDonald Hester, who bought an untamed, primitive but beautiful property and then tamed it, preserved it and cherished it. That property evolved into the Continental Country Club as we know it.

In 1843, Cummins' great-grandfather, Thomas Robertson, was the first settler of what is now Leesburg, and was the first to get a land grant through the Armed Forces Act of 1842. It was a grant of 160 acres on the southwest end of Lake Griffin on the site where Eckerd Drugs and Lake Community Hospital now stand. This act by the government was to induce settlers to move into the area, develop land and live in peace with the Indians.

Evander Lee came to the area shortly after Robertson and put his slaves to work cutting logs for cabins and clearing the land so crops could be planted. Lee founded the town and Leesburg is named after him.⁸

Frederick Cummins Hester was born on December 27, 1900 in Whitney, a small community west of Leesburg. His father, F.C. Hester, was in the sawmill business and eventually owned and operated (with his two sons, Earle and Cummins) the Hester and Stinson Lumber Co.

In the early days, another pioneer family, the McDonalds, arrived and settled in Fairville, just northwest of Orlando, where they owned extensive orange groves. The family lost everything in the Big Freeze of 1896 and moved to Iowa. Their daughter, Gladyce, was born in Sioux City on December 5, 1903.

Gladyce was and is a very talented, beautiful lady. One admirer, Frank Slaughter, said: "She is the very essence of a lady in the best sense of the word, and a remarkably talented artist."

This pretty lady, while on a "Tin Can Tour" to Florida in 1924, met Cummins on a blind date. Ann Hester Chambers, their daughter, explained that the tours were given that name because they were caravans of tourists and campers riding in the "Tin Lizzy" Fords, sleeping in tents, cooking out and sometimes leaving a trail of discarded tin cans in their wake.

Gladyce and Cummins married in 1926 and lived for six years in Palmora Park on Lake Harris. The couple had two children, Ann Hester Chambers of Eustis and the late Dr. Frederick Hester, who practiced medicine in Eustis.

In 1932 they moved to Wildwood, where Cummins was a partner in business with his brother, Earle, in Hester's Lumber and Building Materials, Inc. for 40 years.

⁸ George Rast, Curator of the Leesburg Heritage Society.

⁹ Much of this material comes from the 1978 account written by Carol Alain and Paula 'Pepper' Coggin. Some of the wording is changed and new material added.

The brothers began acquiring land in 1935 and bought the first 80 acres on what is now Continental, later buying more land until they finally owned 900 acres.

"I had a wonderful childhood, and part of that wonder was as a companion to my dad, who taught me so much about beauty and nature," said Ann. A friendly and intelligent woman, Ann characterized her parents with great affection.

"My father was a very handsome man with blond hair and blue eyes. He was sometimes compared to the actor Leslie Howard, but I thought he was much better looking. Daddy had a fantastic mind. He studied genealogy, law, business and every subject imaginable. He had a tremendous library and knew the names of every plant and flower on his property. Life was a great adventure for him."

Ann described her mother as "simply gorgeous," with dark eyes and dark curly hair, and with a great inner beauty as well.

"She made exquisite clothes for herself and me, decorated her homes, and was a very talented artist. She was very close to us children and was supportive and involved in our school affairs."

Gladycce Hester achieved distinction with her art not only in Florida, but she had paintings in many major U.S. cities. She won a national award in 1967 promoted by Motorola Co. and she was one of 12 artists chosen from 10,000 entries. Her painting now hangs in Motorola's permanent collection in Chicago. A life-sized portrait of Seminole Chief Osceola hangs in the Dade Memorial Museum and her work can be seen locally at Glen Haven Gallery and Leesburg Historical Museum. She has also excelled in porcelain painting.

Ann had two careers, one as a professional dancer and another as a fashion designer and artist. Her dancing repertoire included ballroom exhibition, jazz, tap and acrobatic dancing. She appeared at summer resorts and on TV and later had a dance studio in Wildwood. She did fashion design for Jordan March department stores.⁹

Another special family touch is added by Jacquelyn Hester, daughter of Earle Cummins, and President of the Lake County Historical Society. In a speech before the Continental Resident Ladies Club, she said that as a child she loved the wild and beautiful land that is now CCC. She divides her memories into three periods: the Camp Years, the Farm Years and the Ranch Years.¹⁰

¹⁰ Speech to CRLC in November of 1993.

The Camp Years

Jackie reports that she was about ten when the family started to celebrate Armistice Day at the camp, sleeping on the ground and hunting.

"This is when I learned to hunt, using a 20-gauge double-barrelled shotgun, but also finding a place to sit quietly and wait for the squirrels to come swinging through the most beautiful trees you can imagine. They were so large, the limbs reaching out in all directions . . . oak, maple, cypress, holly, bay, sweet gum and many more. Several were later recognized as Champion Trees by the American Forestry Association.¹¹

"We used to sit around the biggest camp fires you can imagine. The men dragged two or three large tree trunks that were 20-30 feet long, stacked them across each other and built a fire in the middle and let it grow until it reached as high as a one-story house. The sparks would fly everywhere," she said.

Another of Jackie's memories was of fishing in Chitta Chatta Creek, where she and her friends caught "stump-knockers." They were the nearest thing to a large bream. "The ones we kept were the size of a large man's hand and, when fried, made a first class dinner for kid campers."

Jackie said that during the initial years, Gladyce Hester, who was a great support to her husband, wanted to call the camp *Magnolia Acres*. "This matched her artistic qualities, and I imagine these grounds inspired many of her paintings," she said.

The abundant wildlife was also of great interest to Cummins Hester and his family. While camping around the fire at night, a great variety of animals were observed, including bears, wild boars, wildcats, panthers and deer. We still have armadillos, opossums, otters, raccoons, fox and squirrels. It also seems to be a way station for migrating birds as well as the year-round feathered residents. There were doves, ducks, hawks, huge owls, mockingbirds, quail, red pileated woodpeckers, wild bantam chickens and wild turkeys as well as wading birds such as ibis, egrets, herons, anhingas, limpkins and gallinule.

And then there were the snakes. Jackie told of one encounter with cottonmouth moccasins.

"One day after I was old enough to buy my first rifle, I decided I would go to camp and test it. The first place I thought of was Chitta Chatta Run.¹²

"I drove out with a friend, laughing and making lots of noise and stomping around in the leaves and grass.

¹¹ More information in a separate section on Champion Trees.

¹² The name means "Red Snake."

"I went over to the run and picked out a log to shoot at, and picked out a limb to see if I could hit a smaller object. "Then I noticed a big black snake with a white mouth and knew immediately it was a cottonmouth moccasin and deadly poison. I shot it and then I saw another on a log . . . and then another . . . I tried to count, but there were too many. My friend and I looked at each other and neither of us said a word. We just backed up and very slowly in exactly the same path we had approached the run, holding our breath all the way. As soon as we got to the car, we jumped in and slammed the door and got out of there as fast as we could. I have never seen that many snakes in one place in my life, not even in a zoo. I don't know how we kept from being bitten."

The Farm Years

The Camp Years were followed by the Farm Years. Irrigation of the truck farming was obtained from several artesian wells, the principal one being near what is now the 5th tee, known then as "Bolton's Bog." Jackie said that her "Uncle Cump" told her about the wells.

"The farm, and later the ranch, required an abundance of water," she explained. "This is how I learned about artesian wells. I was amazed when he struck the first well and I rushed out to see if it were really true. It was, and the water was gushing out like a fountain. It seemed fantastic to have water coming from the ground that didn't need to be pumped. I asked a million questions and waded in water up to my ankles. Uncle Cump finally admitted that a diviner had advised him on where to drill. Actually the diviner showed him two locations and he had two flowing wells."

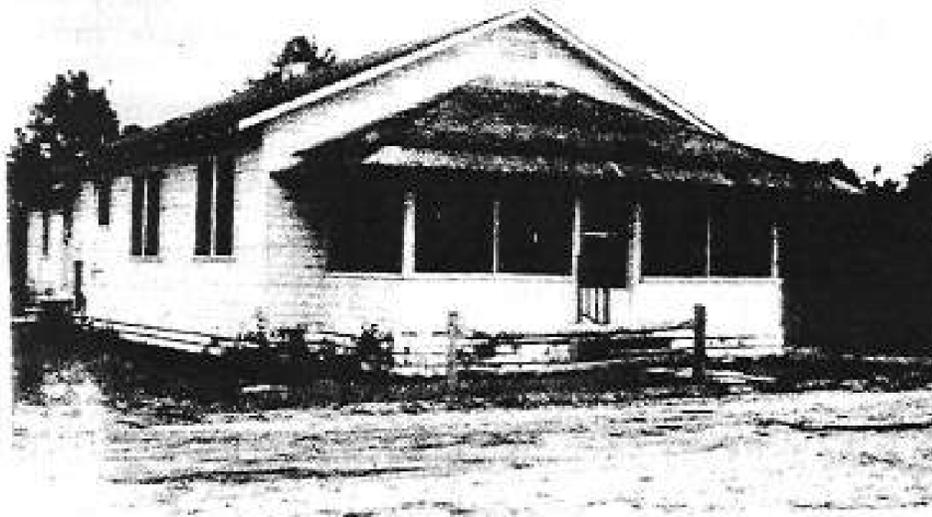
The war years intervened at this point and the Ranch Years had to be postponed until the 1950s.¹³

The Ranch Years

In the 1950s, the Hester brothers acquired a five-acre tract of land on which there was an orange grove and a rather run-down frame house which was later named "Hester House." Gladyce Hester said she personally renovated the house, doing carpenter work, painting and wallpapering until it became livable. This became a vacation and weekend home for the Hester tribe and friends.

A little red barn stood not far from the Hester House and served as grain storage for the cattle feed. Adjacent was a beautiful umbrella-shaped tree, often used as a tree house or fort by visiting children. It was said that the tree was shaped by cattle rubbing against the trunk, which kept the lower limbs from developing.

¹³ An account of the war years is in the section following the Hester years.



Hester House, weekend home of the Hester family and later the first meeting place for CRLC. Photo loaned by CRLC.

There was a pond just below the Hester House and opposite the laundry room (now the ceramics building). It was dredged and stocked with fish for weekend sport. Later it was enlarged and named "Golden Pond."

During those years another favorite spot was adjacent to the 13th green and 14th tee. There was a gazebo there and a long picnic table, and as Jackie recalls: "Many a weekend outing was enjoyed there, with all of us snuggled cozily around a fire, while creatures of the night lingered nearby."

The Ranch era was entered when farming became disappointing and labor hard to get. Cummins started with seven animals, and as Jackie said: "He kept adding stock here and there until he had quite a ranch."

The farm changed from fields of vegetables to beautiful little coves and small areas of lush grass. Cummins did most of the ranching and grass mowing himself, and only went to market with cattle about once a year.

"My uncle was a kind and thoughtful man," Jackie Said. "Even after my father had traded some 40 acres with him, my uncle would still come by and give me a key to the farm gate, even though all the property now belonged to him."

The present entrance to Continental was also the original entrance used by the Hesters. The nearly 900 acres of land that finally became the complete property was Mr. Hester's hobby. He explored and came to know every foot of it, and delighted in taking visitors around in an old

swamp buggy. He studied Indian heritage and discovered along the banks of the creek their systems of markings, and by this means was able to retrace their canoe routes to the east. Scattered throughout the property were many traces of the occupation by early settlers and Indians in the form of old dishes, utensils, arrowheads, nuts and bolts and even an iron stove.

Ann Hester Chambers remembers her father showing her an Indian ceremonial mound on the shores of Lake Okahumpka. "He wouldn't let us kids dig in it because he had too much respect for their customs. He even studied the Seminole language."

"Near the Hester House we found Indian tools and arrowheads with lots of stone chips, showing that this was the spot where they carved arrowheads," Ann added.

In the spot referred to by Ann Chambers on the shore of Lake Okahumpka, Indian artifacts, some dating back thousands of years, were found, including beads, tools, decorated pottery, flint knives and arrowheads. These were authenticated by *National Geographic* in the publication "Sun Circles and Human Hands - Artifacts of North America."

It was also noted that Indians were known to have brewed a tea from the bark of the Dahoon Holly that was drunk by Indian braves to purge themselves before going into battle.

It was always a dream of Mr. and Mrs. Hester to build a home within this federally-protected bird sanctuary and wildlife preserve. They chose the highest point of land on the property where CCC's clubhouse now stands. However, due to failing health, Cummins was obliged to give up ranching. He leased the land to the U.S. Army Air Force during World War II, and late in 1971 sold the property to Continental Camper Resorts, Inc.

In 1972 the Hesters built a home on the shores of Lake Griffin where it all began. Today those of us who live here are grateful for the foresight, appreciation of beauty and preservation which is our heritage from the Hesters.

The War Years

For about two and a half years during World War II, the Hesters leased the property to the United States Army Air Force, which established the first original service groups in the USAAF. These groups included engineering, airplane repair, vehicle repair, ammunition depots and transportation facilities. The common impression has been that this was the site during that period for teaching jungle warfare. This is not true, according to two local men, each of whom served at least two years at this USAAF base.

"I never observed any jungle training," said Nick Castelli, who was a staff sergeant and head of airplane repair. Eddy May, a former NCO ordinance man, now living in Sumter County, agrees with him.

Imagine, if you will, the terrain which greeted the 91st USAAF when it arrived in 1942. The Hesters had cleared and paved a short stretch of road from the front entrance back as far as the present administration building. Beyond that, in all directions, it was a dense jungle of trees, swamps, ponds and a few fields where Cummins had tried his hand at farming.

As far as Nick and Eddy can remember, the property was bounded on the east by what is now County Road 468, but was then called "Coleman Road." The portion across the road where cattle now graze was used as a rifle range and parade ground. It also encircled what is now Sandalwood.

To the north the property encompassed the territory between what is now 44A behind Rail's End. It went south to Chitta Chatta Creek in Phase II. To the west the land extended to what is now County Road 159, next to the present convenience store. There was nothing but a narrow sandy road where we now have State Road 44. That road was built in the late 1940s.

The Army cleared the underbrush so that tents could be erected, mess halls established and various headquarters set up. Some 2,000 to 5,000 military men poured into what was then called "Orange Home," and settled into service units, according to their skills. This migration supplied the Orange Home military enclave with more men than the total population of Leesburg.¹⁴

Nick Castelli, a native of West Virginia, was staff sergeant in charge of the service group which repaired damaged planes. He explained that his group had 14 large trucks, all outfitted to travel to outlying airports such as Ocala, Leesburg, Brooksville and others. In each mobile unit were mechanics, sheet metal workers, shop men, parachute packers and those with other skills, plus the machines and materials they needed to fix airplanes at each airport.

¹⁴ Information by interview with Castelli and Mays.

They also salvaged parts from wrecked planes. The trucks had canvas tops, with a big boom in front. Nick commanded 22 men and trained 332 men to form other service units to go elsewhere. His sheet metal base shop was at the site which is now Rail's End, at the spot where the railroad caboose now rests.



Equipped and ready to roll . . . Pictured here is one of the mobile units used in WWII ready to roll to a nearby airport and equipped to repair airplanes.
Photo courtesy of Nick Castelli & the Leesburg Heritage Society.

The tents had wooden floors, screens and mosquito nets and pot bellied stoves. In Nick's outfit there were four men to a tent and they had their own mess hall. Eddy May's ordinance had larger tents with eight men to a tent, but they were otherwise similarly constructed.

"The mosquitos were fierce," Nick recalled, "and there were lots of snakes. We had to shake our boots every morning because coral snakes like to lurk there . . . the Eastern boys were scared to death."

Eddy agrees that they had to be very careful where they walked because of the coral and rattlesnakes, both of which carried deadly venom.

"There was one soldier bitten by a large coral snake who died in eight seconds!" he remembered.

The latrines were dug to emulate battlefield conditions, so they dug new ones at stated intervals and closed the old ones. They did have showers with drains on concrete floors (such luxury) and in Eddy's outfit there were about eight shower heads.

The motor pool was located about 500 feet from the entrance and was ideal because the towering trees were perfect camouflage and even low-flying planes could not spot them.

Eddy May recalls that foxholes were dug to accustom the men to battle conditions. His motor pool repaired all kinds of vehicles including trucks, weapon carriers, jeeps and officers' vehicles. They were also in charge of the ammunition depot and supplied the surrounding airfields with practice bombs.

"We had bombs that were 100, 500, 750, 1,000 and 2,000 pounds filled with sand into which black powder was inserted so that when the bombs were dropped they had a small explosion so that soldiers in the plane, practicing their skills, could tell where they landed," he explained. "The 100 pound bombs were made of heavy tin but the biggest ones were steel and I spent many an hour filling those babies with sand. The very largest bombs were stored on a wooden platform in sand revetments." His units also assembled by hand the ammunition for 30-50 caliber machine guns.

However, it wasn't all work, sweat, mosquitos and snakes. There was a theater, which later became the Lions' Club building, where they had the main USO shows, such as when Max Baer and his sparring partner put on boxing exhibitions.¹⁵

Nick and his buddies frequented the USO in Leesburg, where Venetian Gardens is now located. Eddy and his friends went to the USO in Wildwood, located north of the train depot. The big attraction there was Michael Georgini and his 18-piece brass band.

The popular tunes they sang and danced to were: "This is the Army, Mr. Jones," "He Wears a Pair of Silver Wings," "You'd Be So Nice to Come Home To," "Don't Sit Under the Apple Tree," "Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition," "GI Jive," "White Cliffs of Dover," and "When the Lights Go On All Over the World."¹⁶

"The soldiers were kings during those years, and USOs were filled with soldiers dancing with local girls while local boys sulked down at the pool hall."¹⁷

Many of the soldiers returned and married local girls and settled down. Nick and Eddy were among them. Nick married Helen Lynch in 1944 and became a partner with "Slim" Burleson, a wartime buddy, in B&C Body Shop, Leesburg, which is still in operation. Slim is deceased and Nick's son Peter now runs the business.

Eddy went overseas in 1945 but came back to marry Irene Williams. He worked on the railroad in Oxford until his retirement.

¹⁵ Max Baer was a colorful American boxer who held the world's heavyweight championship for one year in the mid-1930s. He retired from the ring in 1941.

¹⁶ *This Fabulous Century*, Time-Life Books, Volume IV.

¹⁷ Frank Slaughter

Frank Slaughter said, "World War II brought much change. DDT was used extensively and relieved the insect problem. The war brought us out of the Depression, sent young men into service, the railroad became busy and hired many farmers and others who had poor jobs or none at all."

Castelli said that in March of 1944 the Air Force gave orders to abandon camp. "They were in a big hurry and it was impossible to take anything with us or transfer anything so we had to bury everything. This included tools, airplane engines, food . . . everything. Traces of these mounds can still be found at Continental and I guess that is the legacy the USAAF left for Continental residents," he concluded.

CHAMPION TREES

"I think that I shall never see, a poem lovely as a tree . . ." ¹⁸

All of us memorized the poem, "Trees" in grade school or sang it as a song in high school glee club.

Trees, with their towering heights a symbol of strength, have been worshipped by primitive peoples as a home of spirits. Unless modern men and women are blind to beauty, trees still inspire awe.

Thus it was that a crowning triumph for F. Cummins Hester and his family was when he discovered seven special trees on his property, five of which later qualified as Champion Trees in the American Forestry Association's Registry of Big Trees.

"Big Trees" were defined as the sum of the tree's height, circumference of the trunk four feet from the ground, and one-fourth of its crown spread.

"Sumter County now has five champion trees, thanks to the interest and efforts of Mr. F.C. Hester of Wildwood," was the opening paragraph of an article in the *Sumter County Times*. ¹⁹

"Mr. Hester located the trees on land east of Wildwood, which he recently sold to Continental Camper Resorts, Inc.

"According to Albert Lundy, County Forester, there are 865 species native to the U.S., and the Forestry Association has a campaign to locate and preserve the largest living specimens."

There has been some confusion about Champion Trees because some are known by a common name as well as a botanical name.



The last surviving Champion Tree, a Common Winterberry, is seen here as it was in the spring of 1978. It is 40' high with a 16' spread and is located near the 12th green. It now leans almost parallel to the ground. Photo loaned by Carol Alain.

¹⁸ The poem was first published in 1913 by Alfred Joyce Kilmer, who, although he produced a large body of work, was remembered chiefly for "Trees."

¹⁹ *Sumter County Times-Herald Express*, Jan. 27, 1972.

The following were nominated:

Common Winterberry, which Mr. Hester called "Crooked Wood."

The botanical name is *Ilex verticellata*. It was described as 40 feet high, two feet four inches in circumference with a 16 foot crown spread.

Satin Leaf (*Chrysophyllum olivifera*)

Had a 16 foot spread, was one foot three inches in circumference and 36 feet in height.

Dahoon Holly (*Ilex Cassine*)

Had measurements of one foot 11 inches in circumference, 48 feet tall with a 21 foot spread.

Staggerbush (*Lydonia Ferruginia*)

Was 40 feet tall, with a 21 foot spread and a circumference of 2 feet 5 inches.

Carolina Holly (*Ambiguous Holly, Ilex Ambigua*)

Which was nine feet in circumference, had a 12-foot spread and was 17 feet tall.

Gradually the trees succumbed to old age and were cut down. However, in 1976, two were still in existence. Members of **Continental Resident Ladies Club** had declared their interest in 1976 in "preserving and protecting the natural beauty and balance of nature at Continental," a dedication which led them to purchase bronze plaques to mark the two remaining trees.

A local paper published the following account about that event:

"The highlight of a CRLC monthly meeting, held January 10, 1979, was the presentation of a scrapbook containing a brief history of Continental. Bronze plaques to mark the two remaining Champion Trees nominated by Hester and listed in the American Forestry Association's Registry of Big Trees, were presented.

"Honored guests were Gladyce McDonald Hester and daughter, Ann Hester Chambers; Albert "Buddy" Lundy, Sumter County forester; and Terrell Davis, Lake County forester, all of whom contributed greatly to the project.

"The guests accompanied Pepper Coggin, chairman, and Carol Alain, co-chairman, to the site of the trees, where the plaques were permanently affixed by the two foresters. Specially constructed arrows were provided by Star King, a Continental resident, marking the locations of the trees."²⁰

²⁰ Herald Express, Jan. 19, 1979.

One by one the Champion Trees died except for the Winterberry, a fallen giant, which is still alive but resting almost horizontally. This tree is located near the 12th tee.

In 1985, Catherine Wisely returned to CRLC the bronze plaque that had identified the ancient Staggerbush tree in her back yard, but which had also died.

There are many lordly trees still left, the two most notable are a Cypress and a Live Oak. The huge cypress is considered the oldest tree in the park, with estimates of at least 250 years. It is located near Lake Serenity, and this is the tree in whose branches some bald eagles made a nest. When they vacated, a pair of ospreys took up residence and every spring introduce some offspring to residents.

The Live Oak is on the corner of Hester Trail and Grove Trail on the property of Dorothy Hoare. It is the shapely tree whose silhouette is used as a model for the CCC logo and was Gladyce Hester's favorite tree and a focal point in many of her paintings.



CONTINENTAL CAMPER RESORTS

The New Eden

"A Natural Setting of Unspoiled Beauty," was the headline for a promotional brochure by Continental Camper Resorts in the early 1970s and, according to a number of people who patronized the campground, that was not exaggeration.

What they found was an unusual combination of wilderness and unexpected luxury.

The brochure continued with: ". . . 864 acres with towering, moss-draped trees in dozens of varieties. Miles of trails for cycling and hiking wind through dense growth of magnolia, pine, palm, holly, orange, oak and mahogany many centuries old."²¹

If this sounds like extravagant prose, those who came here in the early 1970s swear it was literally true.

George B. Wayson was the developer who established the recreational vehicle park, built a clubhouse, swimming pool, tennis court, miniature golf course, a general store and gift shop.

The following was proudly announced in a flyer which had as its headline:

**A New Concept in Luxury
Country Club for Campers.
Own a secluded campsite
with resort facilities.²²**

It promised that all would be ready by August 1, 1972.

Kyle Prevo saw it all develop at close range. Kyle, a retired Naval Lt. Commander, was camping in his RV at Lake Deaton in March of 1972. As he was driving through the area he saw heavy equipment clearing trees. He stopped to see what was happening and ended up being hired by Ron Hort, manager, for the job of Lodging Manager.

Prevo said that George Wayson's original concept was based upon the idea that people would be attracted to quiet, back-to-nature vacations in a fully-furnished trailer in an isolated, woodsy setting. He therefore ordered 100 Monitor Trailers of varying lengths and had them parked at the truck stop at Highways 44 and I-75. Kyle's first assignment was to move them to CCC and furnish them with bedding, dishes and cooking utensils. The trailers were then moved to a site north of where the present administration building is located.

But not all was fair in Eden. Kyle checked his trailer inventory once a month. The second month he discovered one had disappeared, apparently stolen.

²¹ Brochures loaned by Dean Hammond.

²² Ibid.



This is what Big Oak Lane was like from Bob & Jane Charlton's home at 104 Big Oak in the spring of 1977. The view is looking toward the clubhouse.

Photo loaned by the Charltons.

The property now known as Phase II was, in those days, Timberwood and was another Wayson company, Timberwood Development, Corp., which also owned Sandalwood. Timberwood Estates had modular mobile homes and Sandalwood had condominiums.

Wayson also offered for sale three types of small site-built homes. The Chalet was a modular home, 12 feet x 24 feet and was priced at \$24,000. The largest was the octagonal Tree House, 900 square feet with a spiral staircase. This was listed at \$27,500.²³

"Unfortunately, the chalets and cabins didn't attract enough money, necessitating a change in concept," Prevo said, "this time to mobile home living."

The Sandalwood project went bankrupt and Grizzard Realty took over the management. Later, the residents purchased it.

Prevo said that when Wayson first laid out the resort he refused to cut down trees unless forced to. This limit on indiscriminate cutting of trees was included in the First Declaration of Restrictions and still stands. In essence it says that no trees having a diameter of six inches measured by two feet or higher shall be removed without written consent of management. Also there shall be no nailing, mutilating, affixing to or utilizing of trees for any purpose without written consent.²⁴

Amenities in the early RV sites included lime rock pads, electricity, water and sewer services. Shower house and laundry facilities were installed in what is now the ceramics building.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ George Wayson, November 19, 1973.

Bath houses were built beside the laundry room, on Magnolia Lane by the 6th tee north of Big Oak, and at the corner of Seminole and Rabbit Trail.

"All the RV'er had to do was to pull his rig onto a site, hook up and enjoy nature," Prevo said.

A Perfect Get-Away-From-It-All Spot

Mention Continental Campers in the early '70s to those who were here then and expressions turn wistful, eyes misty and then grins appear as nostalgia takes over and they are back in those days.

"It was paradise," said Marilyn Steffen. "It was wonderful," said Vee O'Neil. "I wouldn't have missed it for anything," said Jean Smith.

Doris and Gus Stegemerten of Pennsylvania came here in February of 1973. Doris said they were traveling, saw the Continental restaurant sign and stopped for lunch. A month later they returned to buy a lot.

"It was a close-knit group of residents and we felt as if we were part of a huge, extended family," she said. "Everyone was very friendly and entertaining was casual.

"The first New Year's Day we had a patio party in spite of the fact that we had no roof on the patio or porch . . . it was just a slab of concrete that Kyle and his son, Stacy, had just laid. We had a party anyway and had a wonderful time.

"Living here was an adventure because it was so wild. I remember the time I drove around for two and a half hours trying to find my way back home," Doris recalled.

Bob and Jane Charlton of New Hampshire were traveling to Mexico when they discovered Continental campgrounds.

"There was a gasoline shortage that year and we hated to drive much farther, so we parked our trailer, paid \$8 a night and flew to Mexico," Jane said.

However, the Charltons, too, fell under the spell of the park's beauty and returned to buy the lot they still occupy at Big Oak. As did almost all of the residents of that time, they spent only six months here. They put a permanent home on their lot in 1975. They describe the terrain as wild, with sandy paths and dirt roads.

"It was a relaxed lifestyle," Jane recalled. "There was golfing, fishing, bird watching and picking oranges free from a large orange grove that extended down Grove Trail to West Quail Run and to North Bobwhite. Lee Fisher and I used to ride our bikes over to what is now Phase II and pick wild orchids from the trees for centerpieces and pictures."

The Charltons still remember the black-eyed peas Kyle Prevo used to fix for a New Year's Day dinner.

Jane regrets that so many ancient and beautiful trees were cut down, increasingly as the park grew.

Informal and impromptu entertaining was one of the things that delighted Jean and Jim Smith, who came from Tampa and bought a lot on Big Oak in 1972. Jean explained that the campgrounds near Tampa were much too crowded, so they started to look elsewhere. They were visiting a camp across Lake Okahumpka (now Wildwood Estates) and saw construction on this side of the lake. They investigated and were charmed.

"It was perfect, only an hour and a half from Tampa. It was beautiful, wild and private. We could look out over the 5th tee and there were cypress trees all along the edge. It was lovely, but also wet and soggy over there.

"It was a great life and it was always party time. We used to arrange large logs in a circle, build a fire in the middle and a party happened. People came by and stopped without a formal invitation."

In August of 1973, a magazine called *Florida: Fun and Sun Country* ran a six-page feature article with pictures about Continental Camper, written by Roger Langston.²⁵

It would be impossible to reproduce it all here, but Langston waxed lyrical about the place.

"The official name for this fantastic piece of real estate is Continental Camper Resort," he wrote. "Here is camping to challenge the very senses of modern man."

He and his family were impressed by the 26-foot Monitor trailer with air conditioning, gas range, refrigerator, shower and bathroom.

"Camping was looking like a pastime I could thoroughly enjoy."

They were stunned to find a modern country club in the midst of a Florida wilderness.

About the restaurant, he wrote: "For a truly rugged outdoorsman, the restaurant features an unbelievable selection of gourmet foods. This portion of Continental is the personal domain of an affable French chef with the unlikely name of Henri Murphy. He has practiced his culinary art in Europe, South America, Jamaica, Puerto Rico and at the Mouse Trap in Miami.

"His menu reads like something out of the Arabian Nights with specialties like Rainbow Trout Maitre de Hotel; stuffed baked shrimp; Gulf of Mexico Red Snapper Berey; Frog Legs Provencale; Seven Seas Fish Platter with Remoulade Sauce; French Coq au Vin; Duckling a la Orange and Henri's own cheesecake, which is exquisite."

The article mentioned some of the "many nice people" he met and named especially Kyle Prevo, Gus Shaw, sales manager, Don Allred, the golf pro and Don Riley, club manager.

²⁵ Roger Langston of Ponte Verde, is a friend of Thurston and Marge La Fountain, who loaned this article to us.

He ended the article with: "From one who has been there, accept a suggestion in good faith . . . go there while you can enjoy camping in luxury. We did and we loved it."

The swimming pool was a great asset to Continental Campers. It featured two diving boards and a pool heated with a large propane tank on the north side of the pool area, which supplied the gas through buried lines. The furnace has long since been removed. It cost \$800 a month to heat the pool, so that didn't last long. The diving boards also disappeared because insurance liability costs were too high.²⁶

Prevo tells the story of the 1972 New Year's Eve party.

"By December, the dishes and restaurant equipment had arrived, so Ron Hort, the manager, decided he was going to throw a big New Year's bash with great food and drinks. I reminded Ron that we didn't have a liquor license yet, so he just said: 'Well, we'll have to give it away then.'

"So he advertised an 'all you can eat or drink for \$10' and more than 300 people from all over Sumter County and Leesburg showed up. Bars were located all over the premises, but everyone must have had a great time if measured by the confetti, dirty dishes and empty bottles and a general mess."

Kyle had to ask his personal guests to help clean up. The chef had a hangover and Ron had skipped town with his girl, so Kyle and his friends washed dishes all day and cleaned up debris until late in the night on New Year's Day.

Tom Lacy, the first Security Chief, also had trouble with unruly members and guests. He had been a land surveyor and security chief before coming to Continental, so he was experienced. He was also responsible for fire protection and employee safety. All the security guards were paid outsiders.

"We were confronted with rather wild parties from time to time," he said, and recalled one guard being chased around the parking lot by a gun-wielding man in a pickup. There were also wild Stag Night troubles, most of them brought on by outside members. This open membership was allowed for only a short time.

The security building was originally closer to the front entrance but was later moved to its present position.

The miniature golf course was under the oak trees between the tennis courts and Route 44. It only lasted three or four years as mildew, leaves and rot took their toll.

"They could build 'em fast when they wanted to," was a common comment after the Administration Center was built for Wayson, the developer, in one week. This is now known as the Activities Building.

²⁶ Interview with Kyle Provo.

In 1972, Ron Garl, golf course architect, designed an 18-hole course. It was his first job and he later went on to earn an enviable record as a top notch golf course architect.²⁷

Prevo said Wayson may have suffered some losses in his RV concept, but he had wins when he developed the clubhouse, tennis courts and the rest of the amenities.

Wayson ran into financial difficulties and Hershel Smith took over management when a company called "Lifetimes" bought the property. Jim Helms, a native Floridian with a degree in business administration, was hired as manager of the club and restaurant.

In a brochure he distributed to introduce himself he wrote:

"I had my own restaurant in Jacksonville when Hershel Smith, one of the developers of the award-winning Continental asked me to come to Wildwood and manage the club. I couldn't wait to move and start making the club the best for food, service, comfort and congeniality.

"One of my greatest satisfactions is when someone says 'Jim, this is the friendliest place we have been.'"

In 1973-74 Smith re-zoned for mobile home living and units started to move in. Paving of the roads was started, which led to numerous problems caused by equipment ripping up sewer, water and electricity lines. Springstead and Associates were engineers in charge of this project as well as the installation of the sewer plant.

Homes started coming in at the rate of 3-4 each week as the roads continued to expand the livable area.

"Keep in mind that the lower half of what is Phase I had huge, solid water oaks and other trees," Prevo said. "As the utilities were extended and roads paved, the trees couldn't survive the damage to their root systems. That is why that area today has fewer standing older trees. The area around Seminole Path was semi-swampy, necessitating the use of a lot of fill dirt, most of which came from the water pond near Lake Okahumpka."

In 1974, Lifetimes took Chapter 11 after a valiant attempt to raise capital. It didn't work and the property was sold in a merger on December 6, 1974, and the name was changed to Continental Country Club Community. The merger was possible because Hershel Smith, James Lackey and other investors formed the new company on December 16, 1974, with Lackey as its first president.

²⁷ A full account of the early golf is in the Golf Section.

CONTINENTAL COUNTRY CLUB COMMUNITY

The Conley Era, 1975-1979

The golf course, the restaurant and the wooded ambiance continued to draw people to Continental from far-flung states and Canada. Dr. William Orcutt and his wife, Helen, from Chicago, stopped to have lunch at Continental because the restaurant had been highly recommended. They drove around, liked what they saw, and built a home here in 1975.

Part of the incentive to the Orcutts was the fifty percent off on golf fees that was in their contract. Dr. Orcutt was a member of a committee which developed the storage area for RVs and he is still in charge of the keys.

Larry Bermes, a former New York City police officer and his first wife came here in 1976 from Port Charlotte, when there were only dirt roads and 26 homes in Phase I. They were also on vacation when they saw the entrance. Like so many others, they were impressed enough to sell their Port Charlotte home and purchase a home here.

"CCC has improved and is getting better all the time," Larry said.

By October of 1977, roads were paved in Phase I when John and Ellie Munson came, and there were an estimated 125 homes. Their property on West Quail Run was adjacent to the orange grove, which produced the famous Parson Brown juice oranges. Over the years, the 48 trees in the grove were frozen out.

John Munson commented that every now and then cattle would come on the property and graze in the grove.

Andre and Denise Lavery went all over Florida from 1969 to 1975 looking for a winter home. They came to Continental as dinner guests of Carl and Helen Geldart. They recalled that at the time there were no houses on Bobwhite, only two Airstream RVs. While here, the Laverys and their



Continental Entrance 1978.
Picture loaned by Alice Whitehill.

hosts attended a dinner at which Mickey Mantle, the Hall of Fame baseball star, was a guest speaker.

They also recalled the very first street dance at the corner of East Quail Run and Bobwhite: "We put tables on Duke Galstad's carport and driveway and we supplied the music from our house. I think about 50-60 people came."

In January of 1977, John B. Conley was introduced as Continental's new Executive Vice President and General Manager. The following was his introduction in the community newsletter:

"Mr. Conley has 15 years experience in the residential construction and land development industry. In addition, he was formerly president of one of the ten largest residential construction companies in the U.S."²⁸

He started his administration briskly at a dinner meeting of property owners by giving a status report on signs, landscaping, re-location of the maintenance building, clubhouse repairs, mailbox shelters, refurbishing the Administration Building, the construction of a Welcome Center, drainage, street paving and the asphaltting of golf cart paths. He also encouraged homeowners to choose brown as the exterior color for their homes to enhance the "woody" ambiance.

The meeting was a constructive one, and homeowners emerged with a Residents' Advisory Committee, a social chairman and a "Green Thumb" home beautification contest.

Toward the end of 1977, the roads in Phase I were all paved and those in Phase II were well on their way. New street signs were erected and in July, a new model home village was placed to the right of the entrance, featuring the various manufactured home floor plans.

Tennis courts were redone, the golf cart shelter was enlarged, pool furniture restored and everywhere were signs of bustling activity.

In May of 1977 a new chef, Donald Davis of Ruidoso, MN, replaced Bill Heerns in the kitchen.

This was all part of the Continental Facelift, which also included black-topping the roads. Forty-two new couples swelled the population from January through May.

One resident (not identified), writing in the Country Club Living column, said:

"We have been living at Continental a year and a half now, and we have seen progress at its best. Management has been consistent, and we like that . . . steady as a rock. Real professional approach by all department heads and we like that, too . . . Really what more could we ask for? It is a big decision to leave our former homes and settle in a new environment, but management makes sure the transition was smooth."²⁹

²⁸ Continental newsletter of April, 1977.

²⁹ Continental newsletter December, 1977.

The new chef introduced a Royal Buffet three nights a week as well as a Special Sunday Buffet, a wine-tasting party and other innovations. A dance floor in the lounge was added in October of 1978, and activities were enlarged to include 'Slimnastics,' card clubs and bowling leagues. However, golf was still king and the greatest drawing card.

Kyle Prevo's work and dedication were finally recognized in November of 1977 in the Country Club Living column, which said, in part: "As Continental's Operations Officer, superlatives cannot be expressed enough about Kyle. Attention to duty, tact, patience, personal relations, professionalism, loyalty and dedication are just a few. Unfortunately for Kyle, sometimes that must be a disadvantage. Kyle's golf game is practically nonexistent but he knows where his loyalty belongs, and it is not on the golf course. When the sun comes out until the sun goes down, Kyle is dashing around the community making sure his orders are being carried out."³⁰

The canal that Wayson envisioned to be a source of boating pleasure had a setback on Conley's watch. He and Kyle met with DER officials who ordered the canals refilled with soil. The county disagreed with this ruling, but the DER prevailed and a 10 foot high plug was placed across the canal at Chitta Chatta Creek, much to the consternation of boaters and fishermen.

Hidden Lake was dredged at the same time as the canal, but later was pumped dry and deepened. The dirt was used as fill.

When John Conley came, Kyle told him he was going to have trouble with the retention pond, since the canal walls wouldn't permit the necessary percolation, which meant heavy rains would wash sludge over the canal walls.

An eight-inch sewer pipe was put through the retention wall below the water surface so the pond could drain into the swamp. A resident reported this to DER, which agreed to allow the company to monitor the discharge to make sure it met environmental standards.

The plant package consisted of three large tanks coupled together so waste would be treated in one tank, flow into the second and then a third tank for further treatment. At one time, the tanks became full of sludge so Kyle had them completely pumped out. That night a tremendous thunderstorm dropped so much water that two of the now-light tanks began to float. At least one of the couplings broke. There was no alternative. Kyle had to get workers and equipment to dig out under the tanks so they could be resealed. Under Redman, the package plant was replaced with a permanent sewer plant.

³⁰ Continental newsletter December, 1977.

"Fabulous Twosome"

"Continental's fabulous twosome," John and Jean Larvey, were hired by Conley on October 1, 1977, to run the restaurant. Jean was manager-hostess and John was the chef.

The husband/wife team came from a restaurant in Apopka, and they had also worked at Rio Pinar, Orlando. One of their first tasks was to renovate the entire kitchen. John Larvey, Kyle, a plumber, an electrician and an air conditioning expert met to decide what was needed for the renovation.

"After we decided, we worked like crazy to make the changes in as short a time as possible," John said. "We rebuilt the GE convection oven, a gas range was installed and other badly needed repairs were made in record time."³¹

That they were competent and highly popular was recorded in the Country Club Living column which said, in part: "The food at Continental is really superb. Our new chef is doing a bang up job. Particularly noteworthy is his personal touch on everything. He cares, and it is obvious.

"The chef's wife is our hostess and is very warm and hospitable. Of particular note is the way she has trained the waitresses and equally important is the way she remembers people and acknowledges that they have been to the club before. The service is excellent. They are a splendid team and we wish them tremendous success and happiness at Continental."

The Larveys believed in the power of advertising and launched a successful ad campaign through newspapers and radio spots, all prepared and placed by Jean. The restaurant had frequent attractive specials and people from all over came to dine.

There were about five staff people in the morning and nine in the evening. Out front, Jean had seven people at lunch time and nine or ten for dinner time. John was a shrewd buyer in bulk and saved the restaurant thousands of dollars.

The restaurant solicited and obtained parties, luncheons and banquets from outside the park, such as food trays for companies, Leesburg Hospital, and diners and golfers from Rolling Hills, Hawthorne and elsewhere.

One special event was the Hawaiian Luau, which several residents recall as the highlight of each year.

"Tiki torches were placed around the pool: an outside thatch hut served Mai Tai cocktails and the pool was glamorized with floating flowers," Jean said. "John would cook a 25-pound suckling pig for display. I must admit it was a lovely affair."³²

³¹ Continental newsletter April, 1978.

³² Newsletter, April 1978.

In the late 1970s, the Eagle's Nest snack shack was built, mostly for hungry golfers.

The Mantle Entourage

Part of the campaign to attract customers was the public relations coup using Mickey Mantle, Billy Martin, Whitey Ford and Roger Maris. These baseball celebrities brought in restaurant and golfing customers. Maris owned a beer distributorship in Gainesville and sold beer to Continental. Maris was a family man and brought his son here during off-season to play golf. Billy Martin brought lots of pots and pans one year, for reasons unknown, which were given to the maids when he left.

Hershel Smith was a friend of Mickey Mantle, former New York Yankees great and member of the Baseball Hall of Fame.

In the spring of 1978, Mantle agreed to become spokesman for Continental Country Club Community. He was given a home at the corner of Golf View and North Bobwhite. The following was an account of his activities:

"During January, Mickey Mantle was here for the filming of a 30-second TV spot that will be shown throughout Florida in Marcy and April. Mantle, Baseball Hall of Famer, is one of Continental's best known homeowners.

"It's really something special to see your own home and community featured on TV. Everyone here takes pride in his or her property, but when they actually see it on TV, I'm sure there will be some extra boasting by Continental residents," he commented.

"In addition to his home in Dallas, Texas, Mantle owns a



A jovial moment was caught at the Magnolia Golf Tournament Banquet in May of 1980. From left are Joe Silas (back to camera), Mickey Mantle and John Munson.

home here. He stays here several times a year, whenever his frequent business trips bring him to Florida.

"According to George Cook, Continental's Director of Marketing, 'Mantle is an excellent and enthusiastic golfer and plays the challenging PGA course daily while at the community. Mantle also enjoys fishing, and if not on the golf course, he can usually be found casting for big bass on Lake Okahumpka.'

"Mickey often appears at retirement shows throughout the country on behalf of Continental and is one of the community's best spokesmen for the kind of affordable living residents enjoy."³³

In another brochure, he is described as "one of the most exciting and popular players baseball has ever produced . . . and despite his physical problems, is still a valuable asset to the Yankees.

"Born October 20, 1931, in Savinaw, Oklahoma, he resides in Dallas, Texas. He is married and father of four boys, Mickey, David, Billy and Danny."

Those who lived here in those years recall that Mantle had a reputation as an enthusiastic *bon vivant* who loved parties and pretty women. When he flew into Orlando with his friends, so the story goes, the parties began. The Mantle entourage was variously described as "lively," "party boys" and "big pains in the neck for his neighbors."

Mantle managed to offend more people than he pleased and was eased out, to be replaced by Miller Barber, "a very fine person and pro, who is now playing the Seniors Tour."³⁴

Crime Rears Its Ugly Head

"During the Larvey's time in the restaurant, there were three break-ins. The first robbery attempt was made by an employee, who hid on the little balcony near the door leading from the dining room into the kitchen. After the restaurant was closed, he tried to break into the safe, but failed.

"The second attempt netted \$16,000 or more over a holiday weekend. The robber and some suspected accomplices broke through a steel door into the storage room and then through a second door into the kitchen. Using a dolly, they hauled the safe out of the building onto the area between the 17th tee and 18th green, where the safe was found.

"The third time the burglars went through the roof into the men's locker room, then crawled through the air conditioner duct into the kitchen, where they whiled away the time smoking and drinking wine from the bar. They delayed so they could time their activities when

³³ Continental newsletter, Spring of 1978. Loaned by Carol Alain.

³⁴ Continental Country Club brochure, courtesy of Carol Alain.

security was not around. Their attempts were futile but they probably had a good time, if the full ashtrays and empty bottles were any indication."³⁵

After that, management installed two security systems and a new floor safe.

These isolated incidents are especially surprising since crime in Continental is almost nonexistent these days, and a common remark is: "I feel so safe here."

Conley, who now lives in Deland, explained that Fidelity Mortgage Investors first arrived as a lender for George Wayson, and after Wayson's departure, hired Conley on November 29, 1976, to "clean up the mess."

From 1976 to 1982, he paid off the debts previously incurred and replaced employees who were not accountable, efficient and trustworthy.

When Fidelity started coming out of bankruptcy in 1981, the firm began to look for someone to buy Continental, which Freeman did.

Conley said he left because he had accomplished his task of creating a viable business enterprise so Fidelity (Lifetimes) could sell.

³⁵ As told to Brent Fry, researcher and CCC resident.

THE DECADE WE CAME OF AGE 1980-1989

The ten years from 1980 to 1989 were very difficult for me to write about. On the one hand, it was a decade characterized by rapid growth, pleasant living and civic pride. On the other hand, there were troubles, divisive issues and bittersweet memories. Both are part of history.

Many new and attractive activities, learning and public service opportunities were offered. The population grew and there was an air of vigor and accomplishment in the park.

In the social swing were such events as a St. Valentine's Day Sweetheart Ball, at which Pat Maxwell was crowned "Sweetheart." There was a St. Patrick's Day talent show, an art exhibit, bridge marathons, a water ballet by "Jan's Jiggers," and the start of a bowling league. Shuffleboard aficionados competed for trophies, and golf and tennis clubs promoted full schedules and tournaments.

A blood bank was sponsored and educational columns appeared in the park newsletter, such as financial advice by Roger Crist; "Fishing Facts," by Erv Coss; "Tennis Tips," by Myers Adams, and columns by Kay Birdsall on a variety of topics. Helen Ryan wrote about gardening and plants, and Continental Resident Ladies Club and Continental Arts and Crafts Club were vigorous in their programs and projects, making life better and more interesting and helping with substantial donations to philanthropic causes.³⁶ CPR instruction was also available.

First Black Cloud

Apparently, there was not a cloud in the sky, but the first black cloud appeared in April of 1980. The thundercloud that threatened to rain on CCC's parade was first brought to the attention of residents in an article which appeared in the *Leesburg Commercial*, outlining a dispute between the property owners and the developers of Continental Country Club Community, Inc.³⁷

The first story said: "Property owners at Continental are being asked today to become a part of Continental Homeowners Association, Inc. **already incorporated by the developer** and with bylaws that will give control to the development firm, rather than to homeowners.

"The developer is Continental Country Club Community, Inc., formed in 1974, with John B. Conley as president and general manager.

"According to the rules drawn up to govern the proposed association, persons who own lots will be allowed one vote per lot, regardless of the

³⁶ The histories of these clubs are to be found in a special section.

³⁷ Article by Fran Carstairs of the *Leesburg Commercial*, April 26, 1980.

number of owners. A husband and wife will have one vote. The developer, however, will be entitled to five votes for each lot the firm holds, or 200 votes, whichever is greater."

The article went on to say that the developer would have controlling vote in elections or decisions about annual fees or special assessments, and that homeowners would have to pay without question fees for maintenance, water and sewer, storm drainage, insurance and taxes on these facilities, as well as liability insurance. This reneged on all the promises that homeowners were given when they purchased their homes.

A follow-up story on April 27 said it all in the headline: "**Continental Group Rejects Developer's Plan for Association.**"³⁸

On May 21, 1980, Warren Clinch, president of Continental Homeowners Association, formed the previous fall, circulated a memo to all property owners. Following is some of what he said:

"You are all aware that on April 18, 1980, Continental Country Club Community, Inc., through its representatives, John Conley and Kenneth Singer, presented to the residents the documents entitled: Continental Homeowners Association, Inc. Summary letter to Said Document and a colored plat of certain areas. Many residents, both members of our association and non-members, expressed deep concerns over the document.

"Our association held a general membership meeting on April 21st. At this session, a committee was approved to select legal counsel to represent us in matters dealing with the documents and other legal matters. On Thursday, May 15, the Board of Directors met with the selection committee and named Attorney David A. Davis as our legal counsel.

"As President of the Association, I would like to say that we like it here!! We all have chosen to live here and we want to keep Continental Country Club Community our 'Bit of America at Its Best.'"

Attached to the same letter was a memo about the newly-organized Neighborhood Watch Security Program from Al Breitzmann and Bob Nuessle. They were seeking volunteers to man the radio base station during the evening.

Breitzmann said that this was in response to a series of eight home burglaries on one weekend, and at the urging of CRLC President Beulah Sconyers. Al was in charge of the recruiting and scheduling and recalled that every evening volunteers patrolled in golf carts with hand-held lights. The active patrol was apparently successful, as the burglaries ceased. The patrol also gave special attention to homes unoccupied for the summer.

³⁸ Article by Fran Carstairs of the Leesburg Commercial, April 27, 1980.

A New Day??

In February of 1980, the clouds appeared to dissipate, and the sun shone. A new day and a new manager, Donald Freeman, took over Continental and promised to fix everything. Once again, there was a name change to Continental Village and Country Club.

A glossy brochure showed pictures of Eden, including the famous yearly Hawaiian Luau; attractive residents at play; a lake free of weeds and a gorgeous golf course vista. It also showed an artist's conception of a new 15,000 square foot community building, "soon to be built." It remains only a concept to this day.

Freeman Industries launched an elaborate campaign to attract northerners to Continental Seminars with free dinners, films and lectures held in selected cities; brochures and ads were widely distributed.

Free weekends were offered, which included airfare, transportation from the airport, free lodging in a model home, free golf and use of a golf cart and free meals in the restaurant.

We who were enticed from the nasty-weather season up north were dazzled by the palm trees, lakes . . . and Disney; by the beauty of the park, and were impressed and surprised at how attractive manufactured homes can be. There was also a policy of low-key sales with no pressure. One selling point for use was the quality of the restaurant food. Who could resist a Sunday buffet with ice sculpture and champagne fountain?

We also liked the fact that we could buy our lot and not have to rent it as was common among mobile home parks then. We liked Continental from the start, and still do, even after we came down from the clouds to reality.

Moving here from the city took us back in time into our childhoods, when we were reared in a small town. It was easy to make friends, especially since so many of us were newcomers. It was informal happy hour time on nearly every street on most days. Couples such as Jim and Millie Savoie and Doris and Terry Terrenoire took prospective home buyers out to dinner and even after the prospects purchased, the couples like the the Savoies and Terrenoires were helpful in supplying information about shopping, medical facilities, businesses and banks, churches and other things which newcomers needed to know.

A representative from Continental Resident Ladies Club called with a welcome gift of a house plant, and invitations to join the activities here. That spirit is still here and, just as in my old hometown, people take care of each other.

Jim Savoie said that in 1982, Phase II (then still Timberwood) was largely undeveloped. The first houses built here were on Timber Trail beside County Road 468. Three houses were built on Cypress and

purchased by the Savoies, George and Dot Davidson, and Kenneth and Renee Wisth.

"There were no roads as such, just mud," Jim said. "We had to park our cars on the driveways of empty houses on Timber Trail. We went barefoot to the mailbox and then came home and washed our feet. There was a path of sorts we could use to get to the golf course.

"Freeman kept promising roads, but nothing happened. When paving finally started, the Bushnell inspector came in, found the roads were in the wrong place with the wrong gradation, so they had to be ripped out and redone."

In 1983, a homeowners' group was formed, but for social purposes only. After some shuffling of officers, the first slate was: Bob Hansen, president; Bill Nichols, vice-president; Marie Butler, secretary, and Walter Gibson, treasurer. Directors were Walter Heer, Harm O'Brien and Maxine Wert.

Storm Signals

It started clouding up again as it soon became clear that all was not well in Eden under Freeman. Most of his practices ignored the best interests of homeowners and prospective home buyers, as down payments seemed to vanish into a black hole instead of into escrow.

The storm finally broke when Freeman, who was the sole stockholder of Continental Country Club, Inc., declared bankruptcy, thus freezing funds, and in those funds were down payments on homes and lots. The money was not recoverable until several years later when Redman Industries made restitution.

In April of 1985, Glenn Marston wrote a series of articles called Crisis at Continental.³⁹

"Many of the people owed money by CCC claim that company president Donald Freeman has turned an untapped gold mine into an empty hole from which a nugget of profit has never emerged," he wrote.

Freeman was scrambling desperately to recoup losses incurred by his lavish promotions. During a creditors' meeting, he testified that \$346,741 in payroll tax liens filed by the federal government in late January of 1985, forced his company to file for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection. Even after that, deposits on homes and lots were accepted. The bankruptcy announcement was followed by notices that the monthly Operations and Maintenance fee would jump from \$65 to \$135. Angry buzzing sounds were heard throughout the park as residents heard the news.

³⁹ Glenn Marston, April 2 & 3, 1985, Leesburg Commercial.

In the second newspaper story, Marston wrote: "The \$621,000 spent to fly in potential buyers in 1984 produced only \$259,616 in income, testified William H. Woodall, company controller in a March 28 bankruptcy court hearing in Orlando."⁴⁰

Effective March 1, 1985, John T. Allen of St. Petersburg, and Tom Mimms of Tampa, were hired by the Homeowners Association to represent the residents. Homeowner Association President Buck Atkinson headed up a board of fighters who led the successful crusade through the intricacies of bankruptcy court procedure and mobile home law.

New Owners

By November of 1985, Continental was in the process of being purchased jointly by Redman Homes and Intercoastal Communities. Intercoastal also owned Lakes at Leesburg mobile home park. A long and complicated procedure resulted in Intercoastal President Ned Allen running the park, with Fred Babb, Redman vice-president, having overall responsibility.

Editor of the *Chronicle*, Ellie Munson, wrote "A Plea For Composure," which was published in October of 1986. This bears reprinting as a reflection of the times:

"The past months have been full of events that will affect our lives here at Continental. There are decisions to make about what will be done and the best way to do it. Rumors have run rampant, many of them untrue or exaggerated.

"There are conflicting opinions as to the 'right' road to take, and strong feelings have led to unpleasant confrontations. Friends have even turned on friends, and discussions at times bordered on violence.

"This divisiveness is of deep concern to those of us who value the quality of life here. Obviously, the outcome of all negotiations cannot please everyone, but there **will** be an end to it, and we urge you to accept it with good grace and without rancor. In the meantime, let us act like civilized human beings and keep our tempers under control. Remember, that when this is all over, we will take up our lives where we left off. And that will be a good deal easier if we don't ruin relationships and fracture friendships."

⁴⁰ Glen Marston, April 4, 1985. Leesburg Commercial.

Bobby Hunt Arrives

Bobby Hunt was introduced to Continental and its residents when he arrived in February of 1987 from Plant City. Peggy Haworth also came at the same time as a secretary, and was later promoted to Activities Director.

Hunt had been with Redman Industries since March of 1973 as controller for a two-plant operation in Mesa, Arizona. He was controller for Redman in Plant City when he was asked to come to CCC, and when Intercoastal left in February of 1988, he added the responsibility of General Manager to his duties.

He said that Intercoastal spent a lot of money on re-doing the entrance to the park and renovating the restaurant.

"The rest of the park was in pretty good shape," he said. "When Intercoastal was here, 30 homes were sold. Since Fred Babb was in overall supervision of the park, I reported directly to him. Basically, I was given what the company expectations and goals were and then he left me to carry them out."

* * * * *

In the *Chronicle* of October, 1988, a headline said: "**Redman Industries Wants Out of CCC.**" The article went on to say:

"At a recent meeting with residents, Bob Hunt, General Manager, stated that the long range goal of Redman is to sell CCC. They will taken any action to make their interests attractive to prospective buyers.

"The short term goal is to take steps necessary to reduce or eliminate the present and projected financial losses in four segments of the business: sales, restaurant, park (O&M) and the golf course. It appears that since CCC cannot profitably manage all of these activities, they will take actions necessary to take Redman out of the management picture. One method is to lease the activities to an outsider who, depending upon the agreement, will pay Redman each month for the privilege of operating the facility.

"The other method is to subcontract services to a third party, which enables Redman to divorce itself from the day-to-day operations."

Hunt announced the following changes in the operation.:

1. Effective August 30, the restaurant has been leased to Tony De Mascio.
2. The model center at the entrance will be eliminated and model homes relocated to vacant lots throughout the park for future sale.
3. That part of the O&M services furnished by CCC will be supplied by outside contractors, except for water and sewer, as CCC is now considered a public utility and will be guaranteed a return on investment when the Public Service Commission sets the rates."

We Became Owners

In the late 1980s, Continental residents were tired of developers, their methods and unaccountability to those who lived and invested here. Increasingly, there was talk over bridge tables, on the golf course and over a glass of wine, exploring the possibility of residents purchasing and owning the park.

Committees explored the procedure and feasibility of such a move with experts and especially with people from Hawthorne, who now owned their village. Naturally, there was lively debate and strong opinions, pro and con. The upshot, however was reported in two April issues of the Continental Chronicle.

"Sales Agreement Signed" was the headline in the April, 1989 Chronicle.

"The agreement for sale and purchase of CCC has been signed. Fred Babb, president of CCC and Charles Noll, president of CCRHA, signed the necessary documents, effective April 4, 1989.

"The agreement calls for the purchase of assets of CCC, except for the Emerson property, the acreage across from the entrance on State Road 44, and the developed, unoccupied lots in Phase I and II. Under the agreement, residents have 45 days to develop, plan and secure the necessary financing.

"If we are successful, we then have 75 days during which the 'due diligence' work of engineering inspections, review of permits and licenses and other legal and governmental requirements is done."

* * * * *

CCRHA President, Charles Noll, reported the following in the August issue of the Continental Echo:

"On August 3, 1989, residents completed the purchase of Continental Country Club from Redman Industries. This purchase represented several months of concentrated effort by Community Resources Corp. in conjunction with the residents.

"Participating residents purchased a share (\$3,000) in the corporation and 361 residents also purchased Charter Memberships (\$4,000) in the golf course.

"To accomplish this purchase, a non-profit corporation called 'CCC R.O.' (resident owned) was set up to acquire all of the assets of CCC except the water and sewer systems. A separate subsidiary for-profit corporation, called Continental Utility Corp. was set up to purchase the water and sewer systems.

"The Interim Board of Directors has appointed Bobby E. Hunt as General Manager of the corporation."

* * * * *

This history ends as the 1980s ended, with an account of a new freedom for CCC as well as heavier responsibilities. It seems to me that we have had good stewards in each board of directors. We may not have agreed with all of their decisions, and we let them know that. What we have not done is to thank them for the hundreds of hours devoted to CCC business, and for taking complaints and criticism with patience and grace.

So here is the thanks and appreciation of the residents to the following Homeowner Presidents from the inception through the 1980s. We also salute their officers, directors and committee chairmen.

1980	Warren Clinch
1981	Corwin Woodard
1982	Corwin Woodard (Al Breitzmann finished this term)
1984	Bob Hansen
1985	Buck Atkinson (Did not finish his term and his vice-president, Jim Savoie took over)
1986-87	Jim Savoie
1988	Dean Hammond
1989	Charles Noll

CONTINENTAL RESIDENTS LADIES CLUB

"To preserve the natural beauty and balance of nature at Continental and to be helpful to Sumter County."

The sponsorship of this history is just the latest of the civic projects to which the members of CRLC have been devoted since they were first organized in 1976.

In going through 18 years of minutes, newsletters and clippings, I was impressed by the variety of interests CRLC women have had: the determination, efficiency and success they displayed in pursuing their projects, and the great respect in which the club has been held and still is. **We have and are influencing events here.**

In this history we see the movers and shakers, the caring and the sensitive and the hard workers.

Along with it, club members had a splendid time having fun with dancing, art shows, water ballet, fashion shows, and Easter bonnet contests.

They had a thirst for knowledge, as their programs indicated. Best of all, they put their money where their hearts were: for those in need.

The club had a modest beginning in October of 1977, when about a dozen women met in the home of Ann Phillips to organize. Their stated goal has been repeated at the top of this page. This goal was highlighted in the section on Champion Trees, but beautification of our park continues to this day.

These women chose a name, a meeting place in Hester House, and decided to levy annual dues of \$5. They planned and produced name tags featuring the silhouette of the big live oak tree at the corner of Grove and Hester Trails. This is the same tree that was chosen for our



In their Easter bonnets are the April 1982 winners of the bonnet, centered from left are: Daye Birdsall, Betty Kohlmeier and Esther Southard. The contest used to be an annual event. Photo from CRLC's archives.

logo, and was Gladycie Hester's favorite tree and model for landscapes in her paintings.

If a member came to a meeting without her name tag, she had to pay a five cent penalty.

Jane Hardwicke was the first president; Jackie Silas was vice-president, and Carlotta Stapleberg was secretary-treasurer.

By February of 1977, the membership was swelled by 13 more women who launched the first White Elephant Sale at Hester House. It was a brown bag, "bring whatever items you want to donate" event.

Bylaws were written and a tree planted at Hester House in memory of Ann Chamberlain, a deceased member.

By August of 1978, the membership roster had grown by 54, and even though the members were few, they were enthusiastic and ambitious.

In addition to the bronze plaques for the two Champion Trees, they bought flowering bushes to beautify the golf course.

When you sit on benches at Lake Serenity or Lake Okahumpka and look at the landscaping and flowers, whisper "thanks" to CRLC.

The fun of fashion shows and art classes was enjoyed in 1980. Lighthearted in approach, but serious in purpose was the creation of the Blood Bank. Members of the blood bank club called themselves "The Bloody Bunch" and used "Call Girls" to remind residents to donate blood.

The diligence and dedication of CRLC members was acknowledged in April of 1980 by Denis Coggin, editor of The Chronicle, who wrote:

"A rather remarkable thing about our Garden of Eden is the way our ladies have become our greatest activists."

In 1982, members voted to eliminate meetings during the summer because of low attendance. By October, the membership had increased to 151.

The "protect the natural beauty" was not forgotten. Jane Charlton gave a program on how to build a bluebird nesting box, since the birds were losing their natural nesting places because so many trees had been cut down.

Another popular program was one brought by The Eagle Lady, Doris Magers of Apopka, who rehabilitated injured birds called "raptors." Raptors are eagles, owls, falcons, vultures, hawks and kites. She founded Save Our American Raptors (SOAR) and crusaded for the eagles. So popular was her program that she presented it in 1984 and again in 1987.

So far, we have said little about the vast amount of community service CRLC has done over the years and continues to do. All this required money, which was earned in a number of ways.

To summarize the essence of CRLC, I am reprinting here an article which appeared in the Continental Echo in November of 1993. It summarizes who we are and what we do.

"Several people have reported to me that some residents have been heard to say that they do not join Continental Resident

Ladies Club because we don't DO anything! If you have heard this, or are a new member, I would like to call your attention to some of the many things this club has accomplished.

"CRLC was formed in 1976 in the home of an early resident when CCC was only a year old. Now we have more than 200 members and we are growing. Our history book says.: "They (the early members) wanted to preserve the natural beauty and balance of nature at CCC, and they also wanted to be helpful to Sumter County, and their projects were in line with that."

"This devotion to community began with the purchase and placing of bronze plaques to mark the Winterberry and Staggerbush trees, both of which were on the National Register of Trees.

"From that time to this, our club has given to Sumter Santa; Sumter Senior Citizens' Center; to Hernando/Sumter Community Action; All Children's Hospital; the Blood Bank; Food for the Needy; the Leesburg and Wildwood libraries; the Ambulance and Statue of Liberty funds. We have supported Youth Challenge for troubled youth; the Cancer Society; Hospice and fire victims. We have given terminally ill children wishes that came true; and at home, we have a long-standing program of beautification of our village which still continues.

"We have supported and are supporting Pilot Club projects for the disabled and needy. This year we will again put on a party for seniors in Center Hill for Thanksgiving, and in December, we will send toys to 140 disadvantaged children for a Christmas party at the Sumterville Center.

"We have given Christmas baskets and food for the Love Center (now North Sumter County Services). We helped to pay for park benches, the refrigerator for the guard shack, the original copy machine in the old office. We formed a Loan Cupboard to lend medical supplies and children's furniture for visiting relatives.

"Within our park, we have a better life because of access to golf, craft clubs, exercise classes, weight loss programs, our own library, travel opportunities and driver refresher courses. We have been informed, educated and entertained by speakers on wildlife, environment, music, history, literature, law, politics, personal beauty care and many other subjects.

"I'm sure I have not named everything the club has done, but even if I have forgotten something, those things I have enumerated are still impressive enough so that we can be very proud of our record."

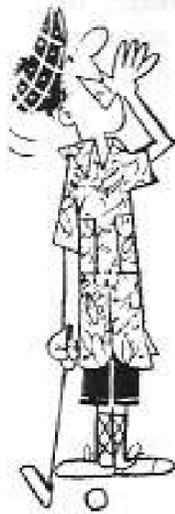
Special thanks must go to our past presidents, without whose leadership the club would have been rudderless. However, the rudder is

only a part of a ship. Without the officers, committee chairmen, and many hard workers, nothing would have been accomplished. All of you came through. You know who you are, so pat yourselves on the back. You helped to make it happen.

Past Presidents

1976	Jane Hardwicke-Cliggett
1977	Lois Hargreaves
1978	Verlon O'Neill
1979	Beulah Conyers
1980	Barbara Starrett
1981	Pepper Coggin
1982	Bette Hansen
1983	Kathy Justen
1984	Jinny Cos
1985	Ellie Munson
1986	Lori Vetter
1987	Lucy Bareza
1988	Kathy Clary
1990	Kitty Imperato
1991	Rosemary Grant
1992-93*	Ruth Zimmer
1994	Eileen Mutsch

**This was only a one-year term, but the fiscal year and the elective year were changed in the bylaws to go from January to January instead of November to November.*



GOLF

Golfer's Prayer

*(from the February 1977
issue of the newsletter)*

Blessed is the poor golfer -
for his kingdom is a better club.
Blessed is the humble golfer -
for his is a better score.
Blessed is the thirsty golfer -
for his is the 19th hole.
Blessed is the pacemaker -
for his fairway has no divots.
Blessed is he who mourns -
for his kingdom will be mulligans.
Blessed be these
champions of us all
and have mercy, Lord, on us duffers still
looking for the ball.

Golf, The Eternal Challenge

Golf has always been a top priority in Continental. In fact, it was established and advertised as "Camper and Golf Community" from its inception. It remains the chief attraction for retirees and provides a significant source of revenue for the park.

In 1972, George Wayson, first owner of Continental Campers, hired a young, unknown golf architect, Ron Garl, to design the course. It was his first job and he later went on to design three Disney courses, and establish his reputation as a top-notch golf course architect.⁴¹

Bob Charlton, a registered professional engineer and early resident, wrote about the creation of the golf course.⁴²

"The golf course itself was cut out of heavily wooded land with quite a bit of it swampland, which presented some very difficult problems insofar as drainage is concerned. The course turned out to be interesting and very challenging because of the narrow fairway and many trees. Mr. Garl did a creditable job considering that he probably operated on a pretty tight budget. He also had some rather innovative ideas such as the layout of the first green representing the State of Florida. A huge oak tree was left in the middle of number two fairway, which you could try to go over or around in some manner, and a swamp with a line of trees extended into the middle of number five fairway which presented an interesting problem.

"The greenskeeper at this time was a young man by the name of Jim Coffee, and he employed a crew of several girls who worked very hard and took considerable pride in keeping the course in shape."

Wait Ellis recalled that: "The course is medium length and primarily an accuracy or placement setup. It's long enough from the back tees to satisfy the long hitters, yet from the member's tees it's playable for the seniors. All the sharp doglegs and protruding trees make it play much harder than the yardage indicates."



⁴¹ Waitman Ellis, resident owner and charter golf member, writing in 1992.

⁴² Summary of golf course needs, written in December, 1982 by Bob Charlton.

Frank Slaughter and John Coniglio, prominent citizens of Wildwood, believe they were the first to play the course on the fifth of November, 1972, and we have the score card to prove it.

John Coniglio *Frank Slaughter*
 Player 1 Signature Player 2 Signature 11/5/72

Score's Signature	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	OUT	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	IN	TOTAL
Long Parlage	41	42	44	41	38	34	48	55	55	208	52	50	52	54	52	54	56	55	55	55	504
Regular Parlage	35	36	35	32	30	27	41	45	45	204	42	40	42	44	42	44	46	45	45	45	450
Par	5	4	4	4	4	4	5	5	5	18	5	4	4	5	5	4	4	4	4	4	36
<i>John</i>	6	5	4	7	7	5	8	7	8	74	6	6	6	8	6	5	4	6	6	6	99
<i>Frank</i>	6	5	4	4	6	6	4	6	6	67	6	7	3	3	8	7	5	4	6	4	93
Parlage	8	11	16	14	11	12	3	18	8		7	12	15	12	12	7	4	8	5		
Lowest Parlage	41	42	44	41	38	34	48	55	55	208	52	50	52	54	52	54	56	55	55	55	504

"Kyle Prevo took our greens fees and we found a beautiful golf course, although difficult because the architect had tried to preserve too many trees," Slaughter said.

By 1973, the golf course had been built and was attracting golfers from all over, including Emerson Chamberlain, who came from Connecticut, stayed for a week and purchased a lot. He and his wife, Dorothy, still live here. In 1973, Dorothy used to travel from Tavares to play nine hole golf with friends.

Also in 1973, Peter Burns was hired as golf pro, and was reputed to be an excellent addition to the staff. The first pro tournament was held in January of 1973 at the same time the clubhouse and pool officially opened.

It was May of 1974 and the magnolia trees were in full, fragrant bloom. That's when the first Magnolia Tournament was held, a tradition that continued for a decade. Early residents remember the Magnolia Tournaments vividly because of the colorful figures it attracted such as Mickey Mantle, Billy Martin, Roger Maris, Whitey Ford and Miller Barber. Each tournament culminated in an elaborate and festive Magnolia Banquet, with awards, speeches and prizes.

Lucy Barcza, president of Ladies 18 Hole Golf Association, has been very helpful in recalling the early days of golf. She said: "In looking over early resident lists, I find the following types of memberships: Property Owner Members, Property Owners Associate Members, Family Golf Members, Associate Individual Members, Associate Family Members, Individual Golf Members and Corporate Golf Members.

"These memberships date back to 1972, the earliest, I believe, around April of 1972. I found quite a number of our current residents on a list of members who were here by 1974."

Space does not allow a detailed account of all the golfing events, but certain early ones cannot be left out, such as the First Teddy Phillips Memorial Golf Tournament, held on October 23-24, 1976. According to the Continental newsletter, Mickey Mantle, Baseball Hall of Famer and part-time resident here, joined the field. This was an event organized to pay tribute to a man "who was a guiding force in promoting sports in Florida."

"Teddy contributed a great deal to golf," said Pete Burns. "He devoted time and effort to organizing golf and will be missed by all of us."⁴³

There was the Wildwood Rotary Club's first invitational here in January of 1977. Billy Martin, New York Yankees baseball star, teed off at the Second Men's Invitational in April of 1977. On February 3, 1978, Continental beat Silver Lake 47-19 at the **First Central Florida Inter Club Golf Tourney**, and there was much jubilation right here in River City. Six golf courses with 24 golfers from each club participated. Continental triumphantly bore home the large trophy.

"We were happy to learn that a men's golf association has been formed, and we will look forward to their contribution in planning social events in connection with the golf course."⁴⁴

Floyd Croxton was first president; Ernie Stahl, vice-president; Art Birdsall, treasurer and Dick Fuller, secretary. There were 100 members present at the meeting.

Their stated purpose: "To foster fellowship, have more tournaments and other golf and interesting activities." To be a member, you had to be a resident, more than 21 years old and pay \$5 dues per year. By June of 1980, the Association had grown to more than 200 members.

There were, of course, many events in which both men and women played, such as the Scotch Twosome and Scramble, started by Marie Mihill. Her husband, Ken, was responsible for the "Dog Fight" concept.

Tournaments included Bobwhite, Rotary, Sheriff, Habitat, Mulligan, Bankers and even an Easter Tournament. At the latter, Jean and Jim Smith hid plastic eggs on the course, requiring each player to discover at least one egg.

⁴³ March, 1978 Continental newsletter.

⁴⁴ May, 1979 Continental newsletter.

In May of 1987, a Sports' Committee of the Homeowners Association was established to develop communications between management and the golf and tennis clubs. Jerry Fultz chaired a committee made up of Bob Ticehurst, Men's Golf Association; Fredda Gillies of Women's Golf Association; Boots Grabb, who was knowledgeable in tennis and golf, and Bob Charlton, an engineer who had done a study on the golf course.

Later, this became the CCC Golf Committee which represented four golf associations: Women's 18 Hole, Women's Nine Hole, Men's 18 Hole and Men's 9 Hole. It eventually evolved into its present structure.

In the 1980s a number of physical improvements were made to add comfort and safety to golfers. This included water coolers and enclosures on 3, 5, 11, 13 and 17 tees. Another safety feature was the Emergency CB radio network, which was installed in July of 1984. This allowed prompt response if any golfer was taken ill or if there was an urgent message from home.

Another innovation was the installation of a "fertigation" system which combined fertilization and irrigation in one system.

In January of 1983, Adeline Markel won the "Name the Lake" contest with her "Blue Heron Lagoon" title for the body of water adjacent to the lower end of the 10th fairway.

As far as we have been able to discover, the following were Men's Golf Association presidents. (If we have missed some, we apologize.)

1974	Bill Girtman
1975	Al Cardona
1979	Floyd Croxton
1980	Joe Soule
1981	Jerry Fultz
1982-1983	John Munson
1984	Bob Ticehurst
1985	Jack Hickman/John Murphy
1986	Norman Hipsley
1987	Ray Oliveira
1988	Bill Wiegand
1989	Jack Gould

Ladies 18 Hole Golf Association

The Ladies Golf Association was born on March 25, 1974, when 15 women decided to organize. They elected Gerri Bettis as president; vice-president was Candice Williams; treasurer, Kathleen Girtman, and secretary, Joanne Hagler. They adopted bylaws, which Jane Charlton recalls helping to write. The bylaws stated: "The object of this Association shall be to stimulate an interest in golf, promote an invitational and other tournaments." It was also decided that nine holes should be played, and "those wishing to play 18 holes could do so."

Lucy Barcza, past president of the Ladies 18 Hole Golf Association, said that at the September 26, 1974 meeting, an engraved gavel was purchased, which is still passed along to each new president.

By September of 1974, there were 28 members from all over the area: Wildwood, Leesburg, Hawthorne, Bushnell, Fruitland Park and Tavares. Of the early members, Jane Charlton, Fran Small and Dot Chamberlain are still residents here. Kate Canupp recently moved.

"From reading the minutes of years past, it is evident that changes were many. The Golf Association was at the center of all social events. Members ran bingo, had dances and parties and provided child care for parents."⁴⁵



Lucy Barcza (left), president of the 18 Hole Ladies Golf Assn. for 1993-94, presents the President's Cup to the winner, Norma Gordon. The President's Cup Tournament is an annual traditional event. Norma also displays a "joke award" above her head.

The women golfers gained the reputation of not only becoming excellent golfers, but also for their hospitality when they hosted the first Mid-Florida Invitational with 100 women teeing off. A buffet and prizes rewarded the participants.

They also hosted the January, 1978 Tri-County Tournament with a field of 80 players, some of whom were unfortunately rained out in the latter stages of play.

An interesting development for Ladies Golf occurred in 1983, when the Lady Magnolia Tournament was held on March 5-6.

⁴⁵ Reports by Lucy Barcza.

"Invitations have been extended to more than 20 golf clubs surrounding the area to join in this event; plans are underway to feature a lady professional golfer to present a golf clinic." Dinner was an additional \$10.⁴⁶

A number of intriguing names were given to tournaments, such as "throw out the worst hole," "Bingle, Bangle, Bungle" and "Scramble." The women's group here was a member of the Lake County Golf Association, which included five other clubs.

"At present, the 18 Hole Ladies' Golf group has 148 golfers. Of those, 130 are dues-paying members of CCCLGA. The May meeting each year is the installation of officers and honoring of past presidents. Of the 19 past presidents, we are still in touch with 17 of them. Ten are residents here now, two are deceased and one with whom we have lost touch.

"Keeping pace with growing membership and changes in golf course management and resident ownership has been ongoing. In 1994, we celebrated 20 years of growth.

"Many improvement have been made to the course. Our golfers contribute funds for these improvements and take pride in the beautification and upkeep. We also computerized handicap systems; our club pro gives lessons and guidance, and so we feel lucky to have such a beautiful place to live and play, and grateful to those before us who made it all possible.⁴⁷

Following is a list of the past presidents of CCCLGA:

1.	Gerri Bettis	1974-75
2.	Joanne Hagler	1975-76
3.	Kate Canupp	1976-77
4.	Lena Stott	1977-78
5.	Lillian Rawlins	1978-79
6.	Dot Chamberlain	1979-80
7.	Sally Rock	1980-81
8.	Evelyn Johns	1981-82
10.	Peg King	1983-84
11.	Fredda Gilles Fox	1984-85
12.	Kaye Carpenter Saylor	1985-86
13.	Elaine Gregory	1986-87
14.	Evelyn Heroy	1987-88
15.	Betty Rayborn	1988-89
16.	Fran Williams	1989-90
17.	Betty Elkins	1990-91
18.	Betty Fritz	1991-92
19.	Marcy Berg	1992-93
20.	Lucy Barcza	1993-94

⁴⁶ Continental newsletter, February 1983.

⁴⁷ Report by Lucy Barcza.

Ladies 9 Hole Golf Association

It was a "Golf Tailored Day" on March 3, 1983, when the Nine Hole Spring Swing Invitational arrived after months of effort. The Continental newsletter reported the event like this:

"Continental Country Club played host for the first time in this invitational for 9 hole players, which is gaining in popularity throughout the area.

"Chairperson Cathy Wisely and her committee were rewarded with endless praise from members of clubs from Ocala, Pine Oaks, Inverness, Brooksville, Belleview and Zephyr Hills, who joined with members of Continental in making this a memorable event for 75 lady golfers.

"Our Ladies Golf Association assisted with morning refreshments as well as the scoring. Bill Stusak and Walter Gibson headed the committee for cart assignment and scoring and Jerry Breitman was in charge of photography."

The article went on to say that a luncheon followed and prizes were awarded.

The Ladies' Nine Hole Golf Association was organized in 1982, with Mary Bolton as president. The Spring Swing Invitational was its first and very successful venture. The second invitational was held March 1, 1984, also under the guidance of Cathy Wisely, and drew golfers from seven visiting clubs.⁴⁸

It all began with 16 members, with the nine holers sandwiched in with the 18 hole members, from whom they received their hole assignments.⁴⁹

The Continental newsletter of July, 1979, printed an article which was the precursor of what would eventually become a separate golfing entity.

"In 1983, under the presidency of Cathy Wisely, the group decided to stand on its own legs and become a golfing entity in and of itself, acquiring Thursday afternoons as its designated time to golf.

"The overall philosophy developed over the years of the club is 'to stimulate an interest in golf, promote a spirit of cooperation with the golf clubs in the area, and hold Invitational or other tournaments.'

"As early as 1982, Continental Nine Hole Ladies have hosted a yearly Invitational. Currently there are at least 17 other clubs on the circuit, and our Invitational has become one of the more popular events. In 1993, we very proudly hosted one of the largest invitational tournaments at Continental. We had approximately 184 nine hole golfers who thoroughly enjoyed a morning of fun golf as well as the festivities that followed. We are, in turn, invited to attend invitationals held at other clubs.

⁴⁸ With information from Alice Whitehill.

⁴⁹ Nan Patton, 1994 president of Nine Hole Golf Association.

"In addition, the Association has an elected representative on the Golf Board; contributes yearly toward the maintenance of the golf course flower beds; supports Golf Board projects by donating funds to be used toward course improvement. Members have planned and hosted dinners and dances for all residents in an effort to support our restaurant, and at Christmas, club members provide toys and gifts as donations to the Wildwood Pre-Kindergarten children.⁵⁰

Here is the roster of past presidents:

1982	Mary Bolton	1989	Jean Weddle
1983	Cathy Wisely	1990	Lil Jefferson
1984	Jan Stusak	1991	Bradleigh Smith
1985	Doris Wood	1992	Nita Liljestrang
1986	Ginny Hlastan	1993	Judy Mercer
1987	Marge Lange	1994	Nanette Patton
1988	Dolly Christenson		

CCC Men's Nine Hole Association

One of Jerry Moore's proudest possessions is a plaque which was given to him on November 15, 1990. The plaque reads: "To Our Founder, Jerry Moore With Sincere Appreciation and Profound Affection." and was signed by Ed Noll, president, on behalf of the officers and members of the association.

John Terrell, 1991 President, prepared a book for the association, part of which was devoted to the history of its founding. Jerry has given us permission to quote from it.

"Prior to 1986, the only competitive golf available to men at CCC was with the 18 hole association, but early in 1986, something happened to change the picture. It started when Jerry Moore, who had been deeply involved in competitive sports throughout most of his seventy-odd years, was recovering from heart surgery and found 18 holes of golf a bit more than he could handle; however he wasn't about to give up the game. Jerry says 'The Men's 9 Hole Golf Association was born out of necessity,' but this is how it actually came about.

"Jerry's first thought was: 'Why not form an arm of the 18 holers that could function as a 9-hole group?' This suggestion was made and taken to the Men's 18 Hole Golf Association. They liked the concept but felt the 9-holers should function as a separate and independent entity. They even put up a substantial sum of money to help get the project underway.

⁵⁰ Nan Patton.

"The next step was to approach management and persuade them to set aside time for our weekly play. We were told that before they could give us this type of consideration, we must have a minimum of 40 persons committed to participate.

"It was at this point that Jerry Moore, with the help of his associate, Waitman Ellis, really went to work. After determining which men in our park were not members of the 18 holers, each such person was contacted. Jerry covered the park on his bicycle while Wait burned up the phone lines. By early November of 1986, commitments had been secured from 40 prospective members and a meeting was called to decide on future action. Our first officers were Don Chisholm, president; Waitman Ellis, vice-president; Jim Hamilton, secretary and E. Noll, treasurer.

"An organization had now been formed but as yet there was no allotted time for play. Finally, permission was granted for us to share the course with the Nine Hole Ladies on Thursday afternoon. The ladies would have one nine and the men the other. Although this worked, it presented some problems, the biggest one being with carts in families where husband and wife were vying for the same piece of equipment. Eventually we were able to get our allotted time slot and as a result, the home life for many of our members and their spouses became much more placid.

"Those original volunteer officers continued to serve through the calendar year 1987. It was during their administration that a constitution was drawn up by one of our charter members, Bill Yacavone. By June of that year, it had been approved and adopted.

"The first of our now-traditional annual dinner meetings was held in December of 1987 at which time new officers are always elected to serve the following year.

"Since that time officers have changed, our constitution has been revised, new tournaments have been established, but our social program expanded and our membership has grown substantially.

"Time has proven that there was a real need for this group. The Men's 9-Hole Golf Association has become a solid and well-established program that shall endure for many years to come."⁵¹

Past Presidents

1987	Don Chisholm	1991	John Terrell
1988	Charlie Smith	1992	Dick Hamilton
1989	Wil Schmidt	1993-94	Walter Smith
1990	Ed Noll		

⁵¹ John Terrell's report 1991

The Nineteenth Hole

Golf is a game which has fascinated people since the mid-15th century. The Scots are credited with originating it.

"Golf's appeal is universal. There are golf courses below sea level and at elevations of more than 14,000 feet: on deserts and in forests, within the Arctic Circle and inside equatorial jungles.

"The rules of golf are determined jointly by the Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St. Andrews, Scotland (established in 1754) and the US Golf Association, formed in 1984. The former rules the game throughout most of the world, the latter in the United States."⁵²

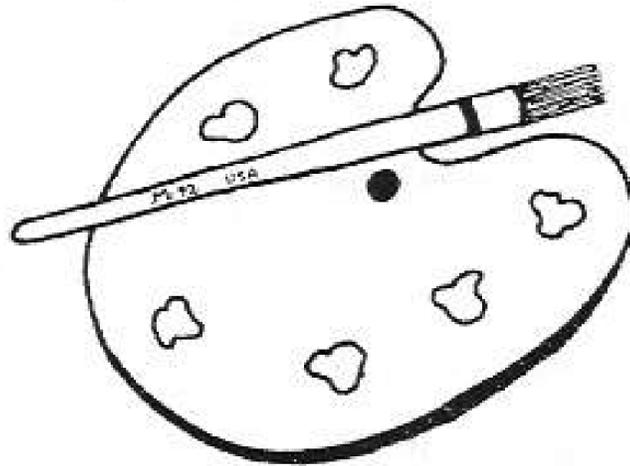
One man, writing anonymously, defined the lure of golf:

"Golf is like an infatuation. You can't wait to be with your love. You dream of her beauty. Golf is a willful mistress. She builds you up only to let you down.

"She is always different and unexpected, and when she lets you win, she is exhilarating. You get disgusted with the Golf Goddess, but you can never leave her."



Continental Arts and Crafts Club



There have always been people in Continental who are very gifted artists. In the early 1980s, Alice Church, a professional artist, was a resident here and taught classes, followed each year by a reception so that residents and friends could see and admire the developing talent of her students.

"The response of the guests was overwhelming. Some said they had expected to see daubs, and were amazed to find that all of the paintings were exquisite."⁵³

We remember the artwork of Gladyce Hester; and of later years, the work of Jane Loveless and Jane McLean. The latter is responsible for the mural in the Magnolia Room, and Jane Loveless, who had several one-woman shows at Lake-Sumter Community College for a number of years. The work of the two Janes will again be featured at the college in October.

Sylvia Springer is an artist of note, and in November of 1985, five CCC residents were accepted to show their work at the Leesburg Art Association's Fall Art Show. They were Ruth Belanger, June Getty, Jane Loveless, Ed Lippincott and Doris Watkins.

⁵³ Newsletter of May, 1980.

It was not until 1983 that there was any effort to have a formal Arts and Crafts Club. Dolly Christenson was one of the small group that started it. She remembered that "a handful of people got together once a week and we each brought whatever crafts or needlework in which we were interested. We worked, compared notes on the work and chatted," she said.

"As I remember, there were Jane Braun, Doris Terrenoire, Marie O'Donnell, Pat Atwater and his mother, Rose Pogue; Lee Fisher, Mary Ferreira, Mary J. Kelly and Jan Cartwright.

"One day somebody said: 'Let's have a club,' and everyone else said, 'Okay, let's do it,' so we did."

"Doris agreed to be president, I was vice-president, Jane was treasurer and Mary was secretary," Dolly said.

"We started with 15 members and decided to meet once a month for lunch. By 1988 we had 143 members and were aiming for 200.

"Everyone worked together as a team with very little nitpicking. In fact, the whole park was like family."

Jan Cartwright was general chairman of the first bazaar, and those who wanted to participate brought items to sell on consignment with the club earning 10% of the selling price. Lee Fisher did the bookkeeping, and reported that it was a nightmare, so next year the arrangement was changed.



Craig and Ruth Ball pose in costume for their roles as proprietors of the annual Country Store & Bazaar, sponsored by Continental Arts & Crafts Club.

Members of CACC have always been energized by any challenge and have introduced a number of innovations.

There have always been programs that both instructed and entertained, but still remained within the artistic interests of the members. Although too numerous to enumerate, they included programs on china and tole painting, quilting, Russian needlepoint, needle punch, art of bread baking, oil and watercolor painting, and all of the varied ceramic techniques and new methods.

In 1985, a Talent Showcase and Silver Tea was introduced. This was mostly a social event to which all residents were invited to share tea and cookies and admire the talents and hobbies of residents from the park. Nearly 50 exhibitors responded, representing a fascinating span of subject matter and materials.

That same energy and enthusiasm prompted members to run highly successful yearly bazaars, even the first one, which had a net income of \$1,904.25.

One hardworking, faithful member, Virginia Relyea, said: "People in the park have no idea of the money we have earned and spent on philanthropic projects. We seldom get credit for it."

Okay, Ginny, I agree, so the following is a list of some of the causes the club has supported and the people who benefitted from the generosity of members of CACC over the years:

Sumter County Ambulance Services (\$500 for "Jaws of Life" apparatus); Christmas baskets and goody bags for the elderly for Christmas; we bought card tables and banquet tables for the Magnolia Room; deck chairs for the swimming pool area; art scholarships for talented art students of Wildwood High School; and for the Wildwood Library, shelving and large print books.

We gave \$1,500 to pay off the copier for the Homeowners Association; gave Pilot Club money for wheelchair ramps and money toward the CRLC Beautification Project.

We supported Youth Challenge, an animal shelter and Lake County Humane Society, the Love Center, Institute of Logopedics and each year give money to Continental Singers.

For ourselves, we purchased linoleum for the ceramics building as well as folding chairs, a portable microphone, a quilting machine and equipment for stained glass hobby. We also paid for two kilns, a typewriter and a two-way radio which is connected to security.

* * * * *

Along the way, everyone has had fun and made friends, besides producing some beautiful work, of which we are all proud. As for fun, ask Lucy Barcza, who was once a clown for a bazaar, or June Getty, whose class made a quilt to be raffled off at the 1986 bazaar, or Pat

Atwater, who has taught dozens of club members the fine points of ceramics and faithfully presided at the kilns. Maybe Pat doesn't think of it as "fun" but at least he knows that club members appreciate his long service.

The club has made an impact on the community and in the county. The Pilot Club, which has its own agenda of public service, has a Civic Night each year to which clubs with community service records are invited to present candidates for "Sumter County Women of the Year." CACC has had a candidate each year, and in 1990, Ruth Zimmer was the winner, representing CACC and Continental.

Thanks go to the presidents who led the club through productive and satisfying years:

1983	Doris Terrenoire
1984	Dolly Christenson
1985	Pat Atwater
1986	Betty Quoss
1987-88	Ruth Zimmer
1989	Kathy Justen
1990	Alice Thompson
1991	Jean Smith
1992	Corrine Weeks
1993	Rosemary Grant
1994	Kitty Imperato

(Pearl Steinmetz filled out this term.)

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Newsletters

How would we ever have found out what was going on in CCC without that valuable tool of communication, the newsletter? In case we take it for granted, we can be grateful that a number of editors devoted many hours so that residents could be informed.

The first newsletter appeared in 1976 and was a four page letter, printed in brown ink on beige paper. The name was the same as the park: "Continental Country Club Community."

George O'Connor edited it from 1977 until Denis Coggin assumed editorship in 1980. In addition to a new editor, it also had a new look and a new name. The "Continental Chronicle" used black ink on white paper with a crisp green logo and trip, and ranged from 6-12 pages.

Ellie Munson, assisted by Joyce Clinch, took over the publication in 1983, and Ellie remained editor until January of 1990 when it was replaced by the Continental Echo with Peggy Haworth as editor. Intercoastal, which was managing the park at the time, asked Peggy to develop the Echo.

All of the editors tried hard to make each publication lively and informative and to provide a needed link between residents.

Ellie Munson was called the Poet Laureate of Continental, and her clever verse amused and brought a lighthearted note to the newsletter.

Continental Singers

Gaining in popularity every year for the beautiful music they produce is the group that makes up the Continental Singers, led by Keith Lancaster.

Keith said that in the spring of 1986, several people, including Bill Ernst, Adele Nicholes and Jack Horth asked him to come up to the Magnolia Room to listen to them sing. They were all interested in forming a group but wanted a professional opinion.

Keith saw possibilities in the voices and agreed to be the director, but said "not unless there was a piano or a good accompanist."

"Would you believe that within a week, they had gotten both?" Keith said. "Betty and Bob Tucker had two pianos and donated one of them to the group. They also found Kate Master as accompanist. This is typical of the generosity of the people who live here, both singers and those who enjoy hearing us make music."

When Kate moved away, Virginia Baker replaced her. The group has stayed at about 32 and 35 voices, and, according to Keith have a "surprisingly good balance . . . six tenors, six sopranos, six altos and six basses."

The Continental Singers never fail to give pleasure whenever they perform.

Donations from CCC residents and organizations include the risers and podium, plus music and music stands.

Keith particularly wants to commend President Bill Ernst, and Ann Kimball, librarian and the person responsible for acquiring good music, and Marilyn Whiteside, associate director.

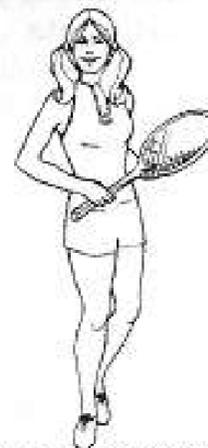
Tennis

In 1976 when the park was new, the tennis court was a big draw to people looking for a Florida home. As early as 1976, Meyers Adams was teaching individuals and groups the fine points of tennis. He also wrote a "Tennis Tips" column for the newsletter on such subjects as "How to evaluate your serve," "How to develop a smooth swing," and "Synchronizing body pivot and arm movement."

In May of 1977, a two-hour tennis seminar and luncheon was held, with four instructors teaching volley, serve, forehand and backhand. That same month, a Double Tennis Championship Tournament was held here for 80 area tennis players.

For a number of years, the tennis courts were busy, and Continental hosted such events as Round Robin Tourney, Continental Classic Tournament and Spring and Fall tournaments.

As the population got older and less lithe, interest waned. Today, according to Peggy Haworth, only about 12 couples use the court with any regularity.



Shuffle Board

The shuffleboard court was put in by George Wayson, and was also an instant hit. By 1977, there were contests once a week with cash prizes. In June of that year, both couples' tournaments and singles' tournaments were held.

Interest remained high and friendly rivalry developed. Sixteen teams, each with a distinctive name like: Holy Rollers, Alleygators, Beejays, Divots, the Rowdies, Gooneybirds and Hurricanes, competed with each other.

In June of 1980, the Leagues' seasons ended with the climax being the Scoreboard. Two pages of the newsletter were devoted to jingles about each team, written by Ellie Munson, poet laureate of CCC.

Those who were there recall how much fun and camaraderie developed and they regret that shuffleboard today is so sedate by comparison.

Bowling

Bowling is another sport that has attracted residents for 17 years, and still has enthusiastic bowling league members.

The May 1978 newsletter printed this notice: "Enough interest has been shown by residents to develop plans for a mixed bowling league, to start next fall. So far, 12 couples have indicated they want to participate."

By October 1, the bowlers gathered at the new Leesburg Lanes. A number of leagues were organized by 1979, with such names as Holy Rollers, Bob Whites, Odd Balls and Woodpeckers. There was keen rivalry and the season ended in April with a victory banquet.

Today Rosemary Grant is in charge of mixed bowling and Pauline Silvers is in charge of Ladies Bowling.

Fishing

Lake Okahumpka once supplied the Indian village of 600 people on its shores with an abundance of fish. Even in the early days of Continental, they were plentiful.

On December 20, 1976, using a 12-pounds test line, telescoping rod and surface plug, Wayne Steffen caught a largemouth bass which weighed 10 pounds and was 26 1/2 inches long. This was Wayne's first act after arriving in Continental.

The newsletter of 1977 showed a picture of Howard Hutson proudly holding a freshwater bass of 26 inches, weighing 8 1/2 pounds.

The late Bernie Caballero tried to organize a fishing club in 1981, but since fishermen tend to be solitary when plying their hobby, it never



Proud angler Wayne Steffen proudly displays his catch of a 10 lb., 2 oz. bass. His first act after arriving at Continental in June of 1979, was to hurry to Lake Okahumpka and try his luck at his favorite sport. Photo loaned by the Steffans.

materialized.

With the deterioration of the lake and canals, fishing is becoming a lost art, to the regret of many.

Library

Although a newcomer to CCC, our own library is such a valuable resource that we must mention it in this history. It was the brainchild of Gale Jaroch, and was born in June of 1993, when Gale said to his wife, Jean, "Let's start a library."

Jean said she was stunned and asked Gale if he realized the scope of such a project. They both became enthusiastic as their plans developed.

"Gale approached Bob Hunt and acquired space in the Activities Building," Jean said. "We got permission from the presidents of all CCC organizations, and put a request in the Echo for books and volunteers.

Russ and Maxine Nero, Kathryn Moody, Mary Keller and Rosemary Deorio responded. Gale and Russ put up the shelves and the library was opened.

"The first donations were a wonderful assortment of hardbacks and paperbacks," Jean said.

Books kept coming in, the library has extended to another room and the quality and variety of books is impressive. Some videos are also available.

* * * * *

Residents never complain, like kids out of school in the summer that "there's nothing to do." In addition to all you have read here, there are pinochle and euchre clubs, bridge for men, for women and as mixed couples.

You can play bingo, go bowling, learn line or country dancing and join the Bible study group. You can also take your pick of travel opportunities from day trips to dinner theater to Christmas shopping trips to extended cruises . . . or read a book from our library.

Take your choices and run out and play.

AFTER WORD

We tried very hard to make this not merely a recitation of facts, but to let the people who lived through those years tell the story, assisted by interviews, clippings, pictures and records. We are grateful for their insight and recollections.

There are many more of you with similar experiences, and we are sorry that we couldn't talk to all of you. **We of CRLC are gratified by the interest expressed in this history, as we view it as a real community effort of which we can all be proud.**

Other Contributors

Myers Adams	Jean & John Larvey
Carol Alain	Denise & Andre Lavery
Pat Atwater	Dick Meek
Ruth Ball	Eddy May
Lucy Barcza	Jerry Moore
Larry Bermes	John and Ellie Munson
Al Breitzmann	Vee O'Neil
Kay Birdsall	Dr. and Mrs. William Orcutt
Ann Hester Chambers	Emmett Peter, Jr.
Emerson & Dot Chamberlain	Nan Patton
Nick Castelli	Kyle Prevo
Dolly Christenson	George Rast
Jane & Bob Charlton	Jim & Millie Savoie
Dean Hammond	Frank Slaughter
Peggy Haworth	Jean & Jim Smith
Norma Hendricks	Marilyn & Wayne Steffan
Jackie Hester	Doris Stegmerten
Gladyce Hester	John Terrell
Bob Hunt	Alice Whitehill
Jean & Gale Jaroch	Catherine Wisely
Tom Lacey	Bob Zimmer
Marge & Thurston La Fountain	
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Roger Langston	

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