

The History of Spanish Trails West – 1987-2012

It has been a struggle from a single-wide mobile home office with a port-a-potty to use on a whole lot of empty land; no homes to show and telemarketing was a struggle. As time moved on in 1987, a clubhouse was built as well as tennis courts, swimming pool, shuffleboard in an enclosed building said to be the only one in Central Florida at that time. We also had free RV storage at the back of the park and still do today and also a fenced in dog run. We are indeed a dog-friendly park.

If some of our information is not exactly as it happened, it is because there are only 9 original residents left in the park and we couldn't remember exactly all of the facts. Those original residents are Grace Seidel, she and Hank were managers and were in that fancy office and later were the first residents who owned the first mobile home in the park on Naranja Street. The others are Marvin Carter, Doreen Ladouceur, Virginia Sonnergren, Helen Simpson, Doris Dufort, Marilyn Savary, Maxine Johnson, and Julie Vernik.

Mr. John Holden made many improvements in the park. He started bringing more models in. In 1998, we were informed of the moving of 17 residents on Siesta Street to other locations in the park. Mr. Holden negotiated with Zephyrhills manager Steve Spina and council members to pay for the moving. Also to switch to city water and take one of our 2 wells, which upset a lot of residents as we now had to pay for water which had been free up to now. Where the 17 homes were on Siesta's East side is now Green Slope Road. This was to relieve traffic from Route 301 up to Wal-Mart and end at Kossick Road. As it turns out, our park started to grow because of more space. The septic system was removed and retention pond from El Sol to Campo Ave was filled in and platted for lots. Also on Piscina Street and Rio Lane to Campo Ave where a driving range originally was then platted and made available for homes. So from that we became a 220 lot park and now 217 are occupied. So from a single-wide office with a port-a-potty for sales we are now 220 lots with only 3 left to fill. Aren't we proud!! The moving of 17 homes was exhausting and nerve racking. It took a year to get us all moved and set up on new lots which was done by seniority. But again, a move forward. (News articles about the move are on the pool table).

In 1990, the park was in bankruptcy. There were 8 individually owned rental homes used for residents to stay in while their units were being assembled. These 8 homes were sold and became part of the park which helped fill it. Mr. Brate was the original owner and 47 homes were in the park. The next owner was Mr. Crandall from California and he did nothing except collect lot rent. Mr. John Holden purchased the park, did a lot of improvements, and brought in many homes. Our park was finally starting to move. The office by this time had its 3rd location. It moved from the home on Amigo by the pond and into the office in the clubhouse where the library and new kitchen are now.

In 2002, Mr. Holden offered the park to residents to purchase and this started the process to raise funds to buy the park or be at the mercy of a new owner which we feared the owner would sell it for more medical buildings. Some very dedicated residents took on the job of selling shares. The original Board of Directors are Frank Maple, Vernon Louk, Dean Munger, Ronald Fournier, Eugene LaFontaine, Georgianna Mattson, and Fred Wehr. The original incorporators of the corporation are Bruce Coffland, Ralph Buckland, and Kenneth Hufford. The original officers are Frank Maple, President, Donald McFarland, Vice-President, Ronald Fournier, Secretary, and Dean Munger, Treasurer. The price of the park was \$4,800,000 and 80 shares needed to be sold to meet the down payment. It soon became clear that they needed a

professional real estate salesman. Bill Gorman was recommended, accepted the job, and brought in salesmen to help the Board.

It was June 2002 and many residents were back up North by then and Board members were making calls to those residents. One week before the deadline they only had 70 shares and so they sold 10 more floating shares and have bought all of the back. At the closing on October 17, 2002 we became a resident-owned community. There have been many improvements since then. The clubhouse was enlarged and permanently closed in with new concrete walls on the pool side and 2 new French doors were installed. The kitchen was remodeled which was a much needed improvement. The old office was now part of the kitchen as the original kitchen ended at the existing door. It could not be used for cooking because it was not up to code. We could make coffee and that was it! For our functions, we cooked at home and brought it to the clubhouse. Shirley Munger drew the floor plans and Jean Maple was in charge of decorations and appliances. Joe and Judy Stedronsky and Elsie McFarland were in charge of the new dance floor, carpet, painting the walls, and decorations. The middle window was removed and closed in for a stage. The new office building, which the real estate office paid half, was brought in before the remodeling could begin. It provides the secretary office, real estate office, 2 bathrooms that can be used for shuffleboard and swimming pool, and a large conference room. The grounds were spruced up. New plants and trees were added and some were re-arranged. So today, we have our beautiful Spanish Trails West Resident-Owned Park. The first home in was Hank and Grace Seidel and the first shareholders are Joe and Judy Stedronsky. They are still in the park except for Hank who is deceased.

It was a long hard climb but here we are – a beautiful park with beautiful residents.

Information collected from residents. Submitted by Virginia Chaney and Julie Vernik.