

# THE HISTORY OF CONQUISTADOR

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1998-2005



"COCONUT" by Susan Mabie

## CONQUISTADOR REPORT 1971-1998

Robert J. Granger had a dream--he envisioned an island of tranquillity for retirees on this 75-acres of ground that faces the St. Lucie River and is adjacent to the Martin County Golf Club. This was virgin land, overgrown with tall slash pines, cabbage palms, fiche trees and saw palmettos.

Spain had ruled Florida for over 200 years and it seemed logical to christen this property in the name of Spanish conquistadors who had explored the area. Indeed, this property joins the St. Lucie River, discovered on Saint's Day of Santa Lucea.

The property would be known by many names and would undergo several transitions and changes from the original plans. We were first advertised as the Conquistador Club and Apartments, then Conquistador Apartment Homes, later Conquistador Estates, Conquistador Condominiums and today we are known as the Conquistador Homeowners Association.

The Conquistador development was not the first to evolve in the area. Cedar Point, Vista Pines and Kingswood on East Ocean Boulevard preceded, replacing the flower farms which proliferated in the areas of Monterey Road, Indian Street and East Ocean Boulevard.

The 1971 original colorful brochure depicted Conquistador Club and Apartment Homes as a magnificent community recreation facility—"Everybody needs a private resort. Here's yours," was the sales pitch.

The proposed clubhouse sketch is a far cry from what eventually developed. The arterial view of the land, described as between St. Lucie River and the Martin County Golf Course, overlooking the Indian River and St. Lucie Inlet to the Atlantic Ocean, depicts that Buildings 1 and 2 are completed, Building 3 is under construction and land has been cleared for Buildings 4 and 5.

The second, even more elaborate sales brochure, states that the Conquistador is on a sheltered "island of tranquillity." This time the aerial map reveals that Phases I and II are complete, one building is under construction in Phase III and the clubhouse is a reality. Trees, shrubbery and flowering plants are more apparent.

The price list of March 1971 shows a one-bedroom unit selling at \$22,450 to \$23,925 with a monthly maintenance fee of \$57.

Plan A—2-bedroom unit—\$25,500 to \$27,500—maintenance \$74.

Plan B (1st floor)—2-bedroom unit—\$26,100 to \$26,850—maintenance \$78.

Plan B—3-bedroom unit—\$30,960 to \$33,000—maintenance \$91.

Prices included choice of wallpaper and wall covering material; choice of color in carpeting; choice of color in kitchen appliances and plumbing fixtures.

The model apartment was No. 105 in Building 1 and the sales office was established in unit 107 of the building.

In November 1972, prices increased along with monthly maintenance fees and estimated taxes. Prices still included choice of wallpaper, carpeting and kitchen appliances. A stall shower was optional in the master bath in Phase II units then under construction.

A one-bedroom unit now sold for \$26,750 to \$30,990 with \$66 maintenance. Under the new price list a 2-bedroom unit under Plan A cost from \$32,500 to \$37,500 and maintenance fee at \$83; Plan B. 2-Bedroom unit on the first floor ranged from \$35,250 to \$38,259 and maintenance fee at \$87, and a three-bedroom unit ranged from \$44,500 to \$51,750, maintenance \$99.

## CLUBHOUSE AND DOCK FACILITY

For many months prior to November 1971, Granger had developed a plan to build a clubhouse and boat dock facility on the 400-feet of river front on the St. Lucie River. In a letter to residents, purchasers and employees, dated November 19, 1971, Granger announced that he had had his day in circuit court and the Martin County zoning director had reversed his objections to the clubhouse construction from his previous testimony. Circuit Court Judge Sample promised a ruling in two weeks. A month later, December 22, 1971, Granger announced that his application for the right to build on the river front had been denied.

In a detailed report to owners on January 4, 1972, Granger proposed that the riverfront plan be abandoned and a clubhouse be built on the west side of St. Lucie Boulevard and south of the entrance gate. This is where it stands today.

Any idea of building a marina and boat docks was also completely abandoned as there was considerable vehement opposition from neighbors who lived immediately north of the riverfront property. The scaled down version from the original plan for a larger boat installation was dedicated as a dock and fishing pier on July 10, 1975.

Permits for this installation were required from the Florida Department of Pollution Control, the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, Florida Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Funds (IITF), and Martin County Building Department.

Construction began the second week of May 1975 and was completed just four weeks later by Doss Marine Co. Of Stuart. The original application for a permit to construct this pier was received by the U. S. Corps of Engineers in 1973.

Details included a dock perpendicular to the shoreline, running 250-feet from shore, which turns north for 125 feet. The pier is eight feet wide and constructed on 10 x 10 inch concrete piling. The water depth at the end of the dock is over five feet at low tide. Originally, 12 to 15 boats could be tied up at one time but that arrangement has since been discarded. There is a fresh water supply for the overall dock, fiberglass fish-cleaning galley is available and there are six grounded electrical outlets spaced along the dock. Maintenance is included in the general common facilities and comes under the common maintenance program. U. S. Homes and Conquistador Corporation constructed the dock as part of its amenity and recreational program at no cost to Conquistador residents.

## U.S. HOMES ASSUMES MANAGEMENT

Granger, who had envisioned and developed the idea for the Conquistador project, announced in April 1972 that U. S. Homes Company was assuming active management of the Conquistador condominium apartments.

U. S Homes was first brought to the area by Granger and were 50-50 partners in the project. U. S. Homes operated the Conquistador as a division of Rutenberg Homes, Inc., a wholly owned subsidiary.

Granger resigned as president of Conquistador Corporation and Dean Van Horn, president of Rutenberg, assumed the position as president. The on-site project management was the responsibility of Edward Wtulich, who had been with Rutenberg Homes for more than six years. (Wtulich continues to reside here in Building 12). Bob Amann was named a partner with Granger in the development of a new apartment project—Rio-Jensen Beach area known as Beacon Twenty-One. Granger remained on the board of the Conquistador Corporation.

### CONDO SALES PLUMMET

Construction was completed in Phases I and II but by December 1975 work had barely been completed on Buildings 11 and 12 of Phase III when the buying market in condo and home sales plummeted across the nation. The energy crisis of the 70's didn't help either. Both combinations prompted U. S. Homes to halt construction of the condominium dwellings and begin building single family residences on the remaining land.

A total of 26 buildings was originally planned for this development.

According to Wtulich of U. S. Homes, the single family dwellings would be two and three-bedroom homes in the price range of \$60,000 to \$80,000. Restrictions still applied in that no one under the age of 13 could reside in apartments or home. The age limit has now been changed to age 18.

It was hoped that lots could be sold by March 1976 and some homes built by that spring. The Stuart News of November 29 and December 3, 1976 printed two building permits for residences in the Conquistador Estates valued at \$38,000.

The formal opening of Conquistador single family homes was the occasion for a champagne and canape party on October 6, 1976, held in the largest of the three model homes, the Monterey (now owned and occupied by William and Sarah Nickerson, 1836 S.E. El Pinar Lane). Residents toured the three model homes and ended up on the pool/patio area of the Monterey for food, conversation and soft guitar music. The other two model homes are owned and occupied today by Joan Warren, 1826 El Pinar and Robert and Thelma Reynolds, 1816 El Pinar.

Attending this formal opening were U. S. Homes representatives from Clearwater, Fla., including Sydney Israel, Herbert Hutt, Jim Shapiro, Gene Mohler and Elizabeth Simmons. Dennis Booth, Conquistador general manager, and Ron Girard, sales manager, were present along with the local staff.

As an indication of slow sales, in December 1976, two-bedroom units in Building 11 of Phase III sold for \$49,000, but new owners were given a year free of maintenance fees as an incentive to buy. The previous January, Phase III had opened with Jack Schneider as director of sales and Conquistador was touted as definitely "Florida Living."

Despite the turmoil and upheavals in ownership, management, staff and development, owners were inaugurating programs and forming committees in an attempt to create an environment that was anything but an "island of tranquillity" as was first advertised in one of the early brochures.

## FIRST SOCIAL COMMITTEE

The first meeting of the Social Committee convened on Monday, October 8, 1973, chaired by the then social director, Donna Strauss. Fran Titus and Louise Payton, co-treasurers, announced expenses of \$113.90, leaving a balance of \$20.10 in the treasury.

On January 1974, Kay Cowden was elected as first president of the committee but resigned in September because of illness. In 1973, Donna Strauss had started a printed newsletter for distribution. Previous to this arrangement residents used "round robin" phone calls from building to building to inform residents of illness, deaths and various events. Also formed was a committee to handle a calendar of clubhouse events and in April 1974 the monthly calendar was distributed to every resident of the complex. The first Conquistador newsletter as we know it today was issued September 30, 1978.

It proved that the social committee was quite involved in varied activities. The special events and monthly activities we enjoy today are the planning of many volunteers in those early years. It is interesting to note that 50 cents was collected for the monthly "Put-Together". Bridge luncheon tickets were \$2.50. The First National Bank of Stuart donated 300 Bingo cards and the committee purchased the cage and master board at a cost of \$63.90. Amusing are the minutes which record that there were rats in the clubhouse and the fact that squirrels were finally being trapped and released in less populated areas.

Special events included parties at Halloween, Valentine's Day, St. Patrick's Day, Christmas, New Years, Labor Day and a bicycle parade on July Fourth. Monthly dances were held in the clubhouse with live music.

Monthly events ran a gamut of choices--men's and women's bridge, backgammon, swim exercise, ceramic classes, art shows, white elephant sales, gourmet cooking classes, Father's Day and Mother's Day luncheons, Las Vegas Night, hobby shows, river cruises, theater, dance lessons, Tupperware parties and even Spanish lessons.

The early minutes reflect constant pleas for cleanliness of kitchen, need of kitchen supplies, pros and cons concerning charges for special events, bridge luncheons, etc. The more we change the more we stay the same!

Treasury reports ranged from \$20 to \$1462 but in 1982 the social committee was forced to borrow \$400 from CHA to cover New Year's Eve expenses.

Donna Strauss resigned in March 1974 in a salary dispute and Wtulich, president of the Conquistador President's Committee, announced a search for a new club manager. On December 8, 1975, Elizabeth "Liz" Simmons was introduced as the new manager and social director. Her salary was paid by U. S. Homes

## LA PLAZA DE CONQUISTADOR

Much interest was generated when a contest was announced to name the grassy area overlooking the St. Lucie River. Dr. Norris Beasley was the winner with his entry of La Plaza de Conquistador. The grand opening ceremony was staged in December 1975. On February 12, 1977, a "first" was created when the plaza was the site of the marriage of Ron Girard and Marilyn Clayton.

Those involved in the early stages of planning are familiar to us today and still reside in the Conquistador. To name a few, Alice Rose, Marge Gdula, Margaret Munch, Marianne Farr, Mabel Bresser, Louise Sweeney, Irma Baretta, Roberta Hoffman, Florrie Dyke, Hazel Wehner, Betty Misure, Ann Wear, Fran Pirrone and Catherine Lewis.

Special recognition should be given to Marge and Mickey Gdula and Evelyn and Paul Ruesch who spearheaded the many activities; Hugo Moeller and later Paul Ruesch who guided the Men's Golf League from 20 members to over 60 golfers and who hosted the original poolside cookout parties and an annual Awards Dinner Dance; Dr. Ray Davis who conducted CPR classes and blood pressure screenings; Watson and Alleyne McKinney, dance and music maestros.

The Stuart News, which had been a weekly publication since 1934 became a daily in October 1973 and was quite lavish in its coverage of Conquistador events in those early years.

## GRAND OPENING OF CLUBHOUSE

A full page spread of pictures and story highlighted the grand opening of Conquistador clubhouse Saturday, December 1, 1973. Three hundred and twenty-five attended the dinner party hosted by owners of the Conquistador Corporation officers for residents of the condominium complex. Cocktails were served at 6:30 p.m. with a continuous buffet opening at 8 p.m.

Al Phinney, general manager, hosted the dinner and introduced many of the association officers and members of the corporation including Edward Wtulich, project manager for U. S. Homes. Also recognized was Mrs. Elsie Thomas, the first Conquistador resident, who resided in Building 1.

Robert Granger, originator of the Conquistador development, was introduced. Some good-natured kidding took place from the owners about the clubhouse not being build on the riverfront location as was originally planned. Residents in the area protested and a dispute over what the zoning code allowed had eventually landed in court.

Even then the environment and better quality of planned development was in the minds of county officials. Two commissioners, Roscoe Philbrick and Edward Gluckler, were in attendance and recognized as being restraining forces on growth in Martin County.

## CONDO NEWS REPORTED

Jan Proudfoot, Building 9, described as a roving reporter for the Stuart News, wrote a weekly column for the Condo News section which detailed cocktail parties, dances, special events, and visitors to and from the Conquistador. Her first column appeared February 13, 1974.

The women's news editor of the Stuart News, Roberta Crawford, spotlighted two Conquistador residents. On May 6, 1973, Cena Christopher Draper, playwright and author who had won her eighth prize for children's play, was featured with picture and story. On December 23, 1973, Bergi Wood was featured for her work in ceramics, sculptures and portrait painting.

The November 15, 1973 publication pictured as models at a luncheon fashion show in the Conquistador clubhouse featuring sports clothes from the Golf Gallery in East Ocean Mall. Models were Betty Zilmer, Marge Whiteway, Ginny Roman, Betty McClure, Louise Sweeney and Sally McCarthy.

A search of the social committee minutes also reveals some innovative projects, including baby furniture rental (1977); Baldwin studio size piano, purchased in 1980 for \$1500: 10th anniversary of clubhouse opening with 178 attending a covered-dish dinner (1983); Ladies' Golf started by Nora Carlson and Eileen McElroy (1987); tennis courts officially opened (1974); social committee deeply involved in refurbishing and redecorating of clubhouse (1989-1990); White Dove project for food and toys (1992).

## CLUBHOUSE ADDITIONS

Although the clubhouse was barely three years old, it was becoming apparent that the facility was not adequate to meet the needs of the many scheduled social events. At a special meeting on January 27, 1976, Marge Gdula as president of the social committee, many members, presidents of several buildings and members of the President's Committee, met with Sydney Israel and Edward Wtulich, U. S. Homes representatives, to protest changes recommended by U. S. Homes. At this point, Israel capitulated and stated that the only changes would be those recommended by the Conquistador social committee.

Those recommendations were:

1. Ballroom soundproofed by installing acoustical ceilings, draping windows and carpeting painted sections of the walls.
2. "Highhats" installed in ceiling spotlights bringing light bulbs down to new acoustical ceilings.
3. Air-conditioning to be surveyed.
4. Portable dance floor for use in ballroom or patio.
5. 72 wooden grained formica lockers to be installed in hall to store liquor, set-ups, etc.
6. Wet bar in cardroom.
7. Roof to be extended outside cardroom to provide screened patio facing pool.
8. Ice machine installed outside clubhouse, easily accessible to ballroom and patio.

9. Footlights and additional handrails on all steps.
10. Improved electrical lines and outlets where appliances are used, including ventilating ducts in kitchen storage area.
11. Two sewing machines supplied in Hobby Room.

### OWNERS ASSUME MANAGEMENT

In the summer of 1977, Conquistador residents prepared to handle the management of this complex in yet another change in ownership. U. S. Homes pulled out of the operation of Conquistador but still owned the land on a 99-year lease. Prior to this, unit owners had been paying a land/lease monthly fee of approximately \$20. U. S. Homes was attempting to raise this fee to \$42 per unit. One hundred percent of owners was mandatory in order to purchase the acreage. Owners agreed and assumed assessments of from \$2000 to \$4000, depending on size of unit, to take over ownership.

U. S. Homes offered its assistance and expertise toward a smooth transition. Dennis Booth with his staff moved out and on, leaving items in the clubhouse office—desk, chair, lamp, typewriter, vinyl sofa, a vacuum sweeper, two-drawer steel filing cabinet and a slotted file box to hold each buildings mail. The first president in this new management agreement was Howard Ashby.

New manager, Edward Van Wagoner, took over the operation in August 1978 and was honored at the October Fest when he resigned in 1982.

### TRAGIC FIRES

The most tragic circumstance to strike Conquistador occurred December 29, 1974 when a devastating fire in Building 6 destroyed six units and claimed the life of Kay Cowden, the social committee's first president.

Smoking in bed was the apparent cause of the blaze which resulted in more than \$700,000 in damage to the structure and personal property. The fire left approximately 17 residents homeless.

Unfortunately, there apparently was a lack of communication between dispatchers and fire companies resulting in a lengthy delay in responding to the initial alarm. Fire companies from Port Salerno, Palm City and Rio were on hand for nearly four hours at this first major blaze to involve a condominium in Martin County.

Fire struck again eight months later on Wednesday, August 20, 1975 in Unit 105, Building I. Firemen from Martin County District Two, the city of Stuart, Rio and Port Salerno responded and fought the blaze for over an hour. The apartment was owned by Louis Weimer who was out of town at the time.

All residents had been evacuated by the time the firemen arrived. The blaze was believed to have started in or near the bedroom area. The bathroom was destroyed and walls and ceiling around the area were damaged. Surrounding apartments were slightly damaged by water and smoke.

## COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Despite the changes in ownership, life went on in the complex as more and more residents moved into units and more homes were constructed. Volunteers were arranging social events and undertaking management of the complex. Residents weren't involved in just fun and games at the Conquistador as many Good Samaritans were working actively in many community affairs.

Lon Wear and Doug Mansell, for example, were devoting several hours a week volunteering at jobs for Martin County Hospital due to the expansion program underway in 1973. If no one else would volunteer, Lon and Doug picked up the doughnuts, made the coffee and served breakfast to the hospital personnel in addition to other activities at the hospital.

Betty Kay Dehon was Conquistador chairperson for the biggest yearly social event, the Martin Memorial Hospital Ball on March 23, 1974 which raised \$85,000. Representatives from each of the 10 buildings, then in existence, assisted including Marci Steele, Margaret Munch, Vera Mansell, Fran Heller, Marjorie Siller, Kay Cowden, Marge Gdula, Alice Auleta, Jan Proudfoot and Bonnie Mueller.

Another example of community service in those early years involved Robert and Frances Heller, the first husband and wife team to join Stuart Middle School's Volunteer Aide program. Robert tutored students in math and Mrs. Heller was involved in the local remedial reading program.

The winter 1976 Conquistador newsletter featured a story on the Taping Center. Several residents volunteered at the Martin County Taping Studio for the county blind and physically handicapped.

The studio had originated nearly a year previously by Conquistador resident, Dr. Norris Beasley and Lucille Beasley under the auspices of the Library of Congress. Volunteers who regularly taped books and magazines on cassettes included Susie Cadenhead, Frank Clark, Margorie March, Alberta Hanna, Marianne Farr, Ann Hubert, Dorothy Hugan, Jan Proudfoot, Leonard Van Gaasbeck and Juddy Whipple.

Today Stuart and Martin County still enjoy the workers from Conquistador who are involved not only in church affairs but you will see familiar faces at the library, hospital, historical sites, service organizations, music, art and cultural events.

This "island of tranquility" first envisioned by Robert Granger is anything but tranquil because of the caring and devoted volunteers involved in the life of the community.

Residents should be grateful for those who have devoted hours of leadership as social committee chairpersons and presidents of the CHA in addition to all those who serve on the various committees.

## Addendum 1999-2000-2001

The past three years have been busier than normal with major improvements to both the upgrading of property and landscaping. The dedication of volunteer work in administration and social activities is admirable. The term "retired" hardly fits those who serve on various boards here at the Conquistador.

Original owners instituted a social committee, which streamlined faster communication with a monthly newsletter. This eliminated the round robin phone chairperson in each building relating to illness, community activities, etc. As the complex grew so did the activities.

Now 30 years later those activities—Golf Leagues, Happy hour, Covered Dish Dinners, Christmas Gala, St. Patrick's Day celebration, etc. – have continued. But, no one could have foreseen the fitness craze of the 80's and 90's. As a result we no longer concentrate on the rental of baby furniture but medical equipment such as wheelchairs, walkers, etc. Soon, the library will be moved to the billiard room to make space for exercise equipment. Flu shots are available each year and blood pressure readings are provided during the month.

Thirty years ago we would not have been involved in pool exercises, attending dinner theaters by bus, attending the Gulfstream Raceway, or exhibition baseball games, or watching a televised Pavoratti production in the card room. Nor would we be attending "55 Alive" drivers course or contributing to White Doves project for the needy. And, none of us could have envisioned a Pancake Breakfast or a Flea Market or a Singles group. Another sign of the times, the formation of a Crime Watch committee.

### Mansard Development

In March 1999, a mansard committee, comprised of Lillian Lynch, Mary Ellen McCormick, Richard McKeon, Len Nichols, William Eagan and Martin Tuohy, presented a detailed report relating to replacing versus repairing present mansards. The plans called for the approval of materials: Delcoa Metal Standing Seam Roofing system over 5/8 inch plywood and 30 lb. Felt with Norandex Solid Vinyl soffits and a color buckskin. The mansard replacement proposal was approved in January 2000. On May 9,

2000, Building 1 had the mansard materials delivered. At this date, all but one building has a bright new appearance and that building is under contract.

Amusingly, the new metal mansards have created another project. Numerous bats had nested for years beneath the building shingles. Now that they no longer have a home, they have found a new one beneath the wooden shakes on the pool gazebos. LR 1 is in the process of replacing the wooden shakes with metal, matching that of the buildings. Buildings 11 & 12 were the first to replace the wooden shakes on the gazebos in the area.

### Pool Walkways

As far back as September 1999, Catherine Lewis in Building 2, requested that consideration be given to the construction of walkways to LR pools for easier access by those with physical disabilities. In the winter of 2000, LR 2 initiated the project with access from the back entrance of each building to the pool area. November of 2001, LR 1 completed the project which has enabled more of our residents to enjoy the pool facility.

### Clubhouse Renovation

In her annual report of social committee activities in December 1999, then president Marge Birsky asked that the community take a long, hard look at the appearance of the clubhouse. She emphasized that the facility received an enormous amount of wear and tear that the card room was in need of paint, the billiard room was dark and depressing and the ballroom urgently needed an uplift.

A clubhouse decorating committee of five members was appointed by the CHA board to study improvements. After numerous meetings, a professional decorator was consulted. In April 2001, the following proposal was presented to the CHA board: Ballroom, card room lobby to include painting, carpeting, reupholstering and papering at a cost of \$71,000, of which \$25,000 comes from the CHA reserves, the balance of \$46,000 assessed against 343 units of approximately \$135/unit payable by June 15, 2001. Work commenced shortly after July 4<sup>th</sup> activities.

Also remodeled and refurnished was the Conquistador business office. The ballroom sound system was upgraded and pavers were installed around the clubhouse pool further enhancing the exterior appearance.

## Hurricane Irene

In September 1999, Hurricane Irene hit this area. Fifty percent of the clubhouse roof was peeled off causing extensive leakage in the ballroom and damage to ceilings, walls and carpet. Minor damage occurred to community property and landscape although several buildings lost wooden shakes to the fury of the storm giving us a look of bomb damage.

## Future Progress

The City of Stuart has plans to install city sewers at the rear of our property by the fall of 2002. When that installation is complete, Conquistador will have 150 days or five months to hook up. Since this is a multi-family community the connection rate will be approximately between \$1500-\$1600 per unit. The installations will eliminate operations of the Conquistador sewage plant.

Interestingly, CHA president, Jack Bower, in his year end report of December 2001 made the statement that “with the aging of our complex we may expect to continue feeling financial pressures for repairs and environmental improvements. We may experience increased costs for maintaining our lawns, and increased fertilization, while improving appearance, may well create the need for considerable re-sodding.”

Hopefully Conquistador residents will continue to enjoy what the original 1971 brochure visualized as a “magnificent community recreation facility-everybody needs a private resort. Here’s yours.”

## Addendum 2002-2006

We pride ourselves because we are known as a friendly, caring community. It would not be possible without the volunteerism of so many who serve year in and year out on the several committees and boards required to manage this complex.

Too often we take for granted that the streets will be cleaned, the grounds and pools will be maintained, the buildings improved, the social events publicized, rules and regulations obeyed and standards enforced.

We owe much to those early residents who were instrumental in initialing and formulating many activities we enjoy today. Most are gone but fortunately others have stepped up to the plate. They have assumed many duties and continue to maintain and regulate this complex proving that we are a friendly, caring community.

### Progress Continues During 2002

The Social Committee was finally recognized as a standing committee and represented at all CHA board meetings.

Condominium buildings were updated with metal mansards and most have exteriors painted.

There was marked improvement as a result of hiring a landscaping contractor.

Property values skyrocketed partly due to excellent improvements and overall increase of property values throughout the area.

Enhancements were completed to the clubhouse including redecorating of foyer, ballroom and library/exercise room. The redecorating of card room including new chairs was scheduled for 2003.

### Sewage Plant

Previously discussed as early as 2002, the plans for the City of Stuart to take over our sewage system continued to involve Lillian Lynch, finance chairperson, who spearheaded the negotiations. She was heard to remark "I know more about sewage than I really wanted to know."

It was her understanding that the city would probably connect in May or June of 2003. Negotiations were finally completed November 2004 after the devastating hurricanes of September.

## Pedestrian Island

In January 2003, John Gairo reported that plans for a crosswalk pedestrian island and left turn lane on St. Lucie Boulevard to the entrance of Conquistador had been presented. Construction was scheduled for February 2004. The improvement was completed November 2004.

As this is being written in October 2005, Martin County has resurfaced St. Lucie Boulevard and in November plans to resurface the front entrance to this complex, past the Guard House to the stop signs. A decided improvement to our development.

## The Mean Season of 2004

This area had not been hit by devastating hurricanes in 25 years. However, Hurricane Irene in September 1999 caused minor damage in the Conquistador complex. We were not so fortunate in August and September 2004. Within three weeks in September we were hit by Frances and Jeanne who took parallel tracks into this area.

Four hurricanes smacked Florida during the unforgettable 2004 season.

Charley slammed Punta Gorda on August 13<sup>th</sup>. This was a Category 4 storm with winds from 131-155 mph and caused an estimated 6.8 billion in damages. It made a second landfall in North Carolina.

Frances, a Category 2 hurricane with 105 mph winds hit on September 5 making landfall on Sewall's Point. It caused some \$9 billion in damage. That was Labor Day weekend. It then crossed the state, went into the Gulf of Mexico before turning north, marched through the panhandle and north through Georgia and as a storm system made it as far north as New York.

Ivan, a strong Category 3 storm with winds of 111-130 mph came ashore in Alabama on Sept. 16<sup>th</sup>. It then hit Florida's panhandle and moved up the central East Coast. It caused \$7.1 billion according to insurance estimates.

Jeanne, a Category 3 storm with winds of 120 mph hit on September 25<sup>th</sup> making landfall on the south side of Hutchinson Island. It caused an estimated \$6 billion damage in the United States. This storm roughly followed Frances' path.

It is a season that those in the Conquistador will not soon forget. Damage to this complex totaled approximately \$400,000.

Three hundred sixty-five feet of our perimeter walls were down, the dock was destroyed along with damage to the river beach area that had to be repaired, entrance gates had to be reinstalled, caps for buildings were damaged, soffit damages had to be replaced, many gazebos were gone, signs were gone, trees and shrubbery debris lay everywhere. Building 11 roof was destroyed, there was damage to clubhouse shingles and some water damage, lift station could not operate as electrical power was gone throughout the area. Portable toilets were brought in and placed throughout the area as there was danger of overflowing sewage flooding the streets.

As an example, cost included \$105,000 to pump out the lift station, debris removal and installation of portable toilets; \$55,000 to replace dock; \$29,000 to repair fences around tennis courts, sewage plant and pools, and \$4,000 to remove damaged walls.

Additionally, insurance claims were filed by individuals for damages from water and food spoilage. A year later some insurance claims have not been finalized and minor repairs in the complex are still being processed.

The storms were blamed for at least 130 deaths in the US, mostly in Florida, and did an estimated \$22 billion in insured wind damage. And now our hearts and prayers go out to those suffering in the devastation of Katrina and Rita in Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana.

One must realize that Conquistador suffered damage but the area also suffered devastating damage. No traffic lights created hazardous driving, plate glass windows in car dealerships along U.S. 1, were shattered, roads in the area, especially on Hutchinson Island were impassable (Indian River Drive is still impassable a year later), there are still homes with blue tarp roofs, Hutchinson Island condos were destroyed when sand inundated first floor units, cars were covered with sand, hotels and restaurants were either destroyed or not as yet in operation, schools, public buildings, utilities and businesses were all damaged and on and on it goes.

#### Continued Change and Progress

As the 2005 season began, there remained a number of repairs to be done as a result of the hurricane damage. Insurance claims continue to be assessed, an assessment for damages also had to be determined, the old sewer plant was decommissioned and plans were to rebuild the dock.

There was a period of turmoil in management when Leslie Frederick, a 19-year veteran, announced her resignation weeks after the hurricanes. A newly employed manager resigned after two months on the job, replaced by another manager who also resigned after a few weeks. In late June, Camille

Fidei, a licensed condominium manager with 12 years experience, assumed the position and after several months has brought stability to this organization. New, too, is a more cost effective system that contracts the bookkeeping duties with an accounting agency.

In an effort to improve the appearance of the grounds and buildings a "Common Area Review Committee" has been formed, chaired by past CHA president Scott Smith.

Conquistador property continues to escalate. Sale prices now range from \$175,000 to \$225,000 depending on several variables such as amount of upgrading, size and view. There was a brief recession in the 80's but once again property has spiraled. Realtors point out that the Conquistador has many amenities, primarily, location, maintenance, waterfront acreage and dock, pools, tennis courts, governed, managed and administered by owners and a variety of social activities contribute to our boast as a sheltered "Island of Tranquility". New residents are urged to participate as tasks are many and varied and we can use all the talent that is available.

### Another Hurricane!

Ironically, as 2005 was coming to a close October proved that Mother Nature was not through with her power.

Monday morning, October 25<sup>th</sup>, after a week of warning, Wicked Wilma hit southeast Florida with a vengeance after striking the west coast previously. Once again Martin County experienced 100 mph winds and once again there was loss of power, loss of roofs, and lots and lots of tree and shrubbery debris littering the landscape.

Conquistador was fortunate in that residents had power restored by Wednesday morning. Others in the county were not so lucky. Several buildings in this complex suffered roof and window leaks, soffits were thrown thither and yon, swimming pools were littered with trash and once again trees were felled throughout the grounds.

The saving grace amid the chaos was the fact that temperatures fell to the low 50's and high 60's, a blessing in that none of us suffered the heat and humidity that accompanied Frances and Jeanne last September.

Nevertheless, early property damage was estimated at more than \$50 million and expected to rise as appraisers continued inspections of commercial properties in Martin County.

Never underestimate the power of a hurricane, a lesson that Floridians are taking more and more seriously as the end of hurricane season finally ends.

## SOCIAL PRESIDENTS

1974	Kay Cowden
1975-77	Marge Gdula
1977-79	Evelyn Ruesch
1979-80	Ginny Jamieson
1980-81	Bierne Knapp
1981-84	Evelyn Ruesch
1984-85	Mary Rannellone
1985-86	Catherine Lewis
1986-88	Lucy Burnal
1988-90	Barbara Baumler
1990-91	Mary Mugridge
1991-92	Dot Roche
1992-94	Ruth Jobes
1994-96	Betty Van Kirk
1996-98	Tish Kerrigan
1998-2000	Marge Birskey
2000-02	June Johnson
2002-04	Nancy Landsiedel
2004-06	Joan Schappert

## CHA PRESIDENTS

1977	Howard Ashby
1978	Joseph Brucato
1979	Lon Wear
1980	Joseph Brucato
1981-82	David Kimmel
1983-84	Nelson Bristol
1985	Frank Clark
1986	Lester Willmer
1987	Matthew Masem
1988-89	Russ Kurtz
1990-91	Francis Quillan
1992-93	Donald Humphrey
1994-95	Lillian Lynch
1996	Perry Rankin
1997-98	Mary McCormick
1999-00	John Brooks
2001-02	Jack Brower
2003-04	Scott Smith
2005-06	Walter Ludwig

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Betty H. Van Kirk  
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