

The History of the Trails... A Planned Community Development

The Trails... Situated among 385 beautiful acres of forest land, The Trails is truly blessed by nature. The Tomoka River and Misner's Branch wind their way through the sturdy oaks, hickories and Florida palms, creating a peaceful, secluded neighborhood.

As we stroll back in time ... In 1974-75, Gerald Upson was building the Tomoka Oakwood Condominium, adjacent to the Tomoka Oaks Country Club, where he met Luke Browning, who was the manager of the Tomoka Oaks Country Club. These two individuals were highly skilled in the development and building fields.

They heard about the 385 acres adjacent to Tomoka Oaks, of beautiful untouched forest land, which at one time a "Coontie Fern Farm" and a "Coquina Stone Quarry" for rock and shell. Gerald Upson was very passionate about trees and the land being left in its natural state.

Together they took their vision to Security First Federal, which opened- a mortgage department and became a subsidiary of "The Trails". Before development started, many trips were taken with his wife Wanda Upson in the motor home to Hilton Head, South Carolina, where his vision was to build a smaller scale of the Hilton Head project. They also took trips in a dune buggy through the 385 acres, where they would see bears, deer, wild boars and snakes. Wanda quotes "I really thought he had lost his mind, I guess he fooled me".

During the early development. Luke Browning had a special dog named "Brownie" who passed away during the construction of "the Trails". Brownie is buried on the first island with the tall coquina rock on the Main Trail at the Nova Road entrance. Luke Browning ventured out of the Trails and moved to Austin, Texas to open an exceptionally large flea market.

The Trails office was constructed where the Regions Bank is now, as SR 40 was only two lanes. The office was later relocated next to Tomoka Elementary. The Trails development was under way with the construction of the shopping center, racquet club and multi-family and single-

family homes. In addition, there are miles of bicycle paths throughout The Trails which Gerald Upson and his wife saw at "Hilton Head".

The tennis courts and a stadium court (for tournaments) were built in the stone quarry area. There were racquet ball and hard courts, also. The racquet club was built with a porch all around it "as it is today" for people to enjoy watching events. The racquet club also had a snack bar and a full-service pro-shop. The first swimming pool was built on the racquet club property. The pool was for the exclusive use of homeowners and racquet club members.

During the construction of phase three, the entrance at SR-40 was under way. Being the creative and nature loving man that Gerald Upson was, he had them take down the two exceptionally large trees at the entrance and turn them upside down and the roots were exposed as landscaping. During this phase Gerald Upson also wanted a wooden bridge built across Misner's Branch so it would keep the natural nature of the forest. The wooden bridge was later converted and paved, due to complaints from the clanking planks from traffic that were annoying homeowners.

Behind phase three there is an area called "Twelve Oaks", some of the lots were on the Tomoka River. This was a very exclusive area. The Rivell's owned the property and had a home on the Tomoka River, which they wanted to keep and live in. Gerald Upson made them a private road named Rivell Trail and is there today.

In 1978 The Trails Community Center was completed, and The Trails development was flourishing. In 1981 Gerald and Wanda Upson's daughter were married. The reception was held at the clubhouse. Gerald put a large red/white/blue ribbon on the front lawn for a helicopter to land and whisk the bride and groom to their honeymoon suite in Orlando, and not knowing a tennis tournament was on-going at the racquet club.... The timing was bad!!!

The Trails won many prestigious awards, and Gerald went on to develop six more subdivisions with several awards for each of these developments. He was so immensely proud of "The Trails" and "The Trails Shopping Center. A map of "The Trails" in its early development is attached. You will notice the clubhouse was not constructed and the wooden bridge was not built, which

would connect phase three to the SR-40 entrance, which was also under construction. A copy of the original brochure is also attached which shows the development of "The Trails" of the shopping center, the racquet club and the unique beauty of "The Trails".

The Trails withstood numerous hurricanes, tropical storms, and the storm of the century on March 13, 1993. During those storms, some of our beautiful trees were damaged and our landscape changed.

Gerald "Jerry" Upson departed this wonderful and beautiful city and left numerous developments for everyone to enjoy and to maintain and preserve his vision of natural beauty.

- Born December 19, 1935, Holly Hill, Florida
- Died December 30, 2012, Daytona Beach, Florida

Wanda and her family will always cherish creativity and enjoy seeing "The Trails" name in all the projects in which they were involved. Enjoy living in "The Trails" and as you travel through the development, whether by car, bicycle or by foot, look at the natural environment of the sturdy oaks, the hickories and the magnolias as well as the Florida palms.

Remember Gerald "Jerry" Upson and Luke Browning, looking at the 385 acres of the untouched forest land in 1974-75. Now... look at the development as it is today and watch as our "Board of Directors" and our committees work to develop a comprehensive and strategic seven (7) year plan. Our mission is to return the development to the prestigious environment as it once was.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to Wanda Upson for taking her valuable time to collect and assemble the brochure, the map and the information about our development which takes us back in time when "The Trails" was the centerpiece of Ormond Beach.

The Trails Mission Statement

To develop a comprehensive seven (7) year plan for renovating, enhancing, and maintaining the environmental preservation appeal that has historically reflected the quality and beauty of "The Trails" and the Ormond Beach community.

