

Hillsboro Windsor Celebrates 40th Birthday

A history from the personal perspective of a long-time resident

The year 2004 marks the fortieth birthday of the Hillsboro Windsor. Our Certificate of Occupancy was granted in 1964—before Neil Armstrong trod on the moon, before Medicare, and before most Americans heard of a country called Vietnam. Jack LaLane was on TV calling for people to “come on down” to Florida. And come they did, to this alien shore.

The H/W along with every other building had its own septic system and train field on the West side of A1A. There was no sewer line. Hillsboro Beach—Broward County’s only island community—looked much more like the Barrier Island it still is.

Multi-family housing units were confined to the H/W, the Imperial, the Colonnade, the Sea Club, and the famous Barefoot Mailman hotel. Those 1960s pioneers set up housekeeping in places called “condos” and “co-ops” and began to read newspaper articles written by lawyers telling how to get along with boards of directors and neighbors that sometimes seemed entirely too “neighborly.”

Our Town Hall stood, of course, as did the police station with its one jail cell. The town itself was incorporated in 1939. We had our own water supply as now from the same facility in Pompano Beach.

Back then, Hillsboro Beach was a community of private homes farther down the Mile. They were called “cottages” and were hidden by dense foliage. One did not see the “in-your-face” 10,000-20,000 square foot monster mansions we drive by today.

The Hillsboro Windsor was originally designed as a seven-story building. That is why the elevator does not go down to the garage. The two pistons providing the hydraulic lift had already been sunk down sixty feet into the ground. The either floor was an after-thought based on greed.

The developer retained ownership of the land. Our owners paid him rent for its use. Originally our property included not only the plot we sit on, but also the three adjacent plots directly across A1A.

The developer contemplated a second “Windsor” on the West side where the units would have even0numbered apartments and offer additional parking for both Windsors. We have little space for additional guests and two- and three-car family parking spots today because none of this ever came to pass. So, the owners dug a garden in the West and grew tomatoes, peppers, papayas, and flowers. The rest of the property remained undeveloped. It was all wild scrub plants, cocoplum, coconut palms, sand dunes, palmetto bugs, and lizards.

Recognizing that the rent for the land lease was going nowhere but straight up, the owners in the mid-1960s were savvy enough to a mortgage loan to buy the land and pay it off. The owners also recognized they were not young entrepreneurs willing to build on the land or to spend their retirement money on additional recreational facilities or ground keeping. So, with the property taxes rising, they decided to sell off the three other lots.

In the early days, H/W-ites were a more homogeneous lot than today. Nobody worked for wages. All were around the same age. They came from single-family homes but learned how to share one roof. The men built stairs down to the sea. They brought a hot water line out to the pool shower. They outlined the planting beds with bricks at the main entrance. The women organized a garden club to handle the ornamentals. Shuffleboard tournaments on the double-sized courts were the rage. One could scare up a duplicate or rubber bridge game on the spur of the moment. There were spontaneous barbecues and well-planned cookouts for any and all occasions or for no occasions at all. The last event of the high season was a golf tourney on the old putting green. And everybody went to the endless round of parties that often ended with dancing under the stars.

In the 1960s, the cocktail reigned supreme. There were frequent cocktail parties and many dinners out at restaurants that featured

dancing as well as dining. It was “black ties” for the gentlemen and dinner dresses for the ladies. As 1960s ended, our original pioneers grew older and, perhaps, wiser, their social activities slowed down somewhat.

By the end of the 1970s, things were changing. Newcomers to Florida chose to move out West to golf course and “near-a-school” communities. High-tech businesses began to set up show West of the beaches. Younger people moved to be near them for an easy commute. As the older beach residents died and their children did not want or could not use the property, units were let go for quick sales and property values quickly declined. By the mid-1980s, it was just about impossible to talk younger people into buying on the beach.

Being a cooperative rather than a condominium hindered sales of H/W units. In a coop, the “owner” does not hold title to a piece of real estate, as in a condominium. He holds a share of stock and a “proprietary lease” from the cooperative corporation. Mortgage lenders were not always keen on lending thousands of dollars for a share of stock and a lease.

And so, the owners began to think of switching from a cooperative form of self-government to a condominium. Serious pursuit of the goal began after the Sovereign State of Florida passed its first Condominium Act in 1991. The new law aimed to curb some of the over-reaching excesses of directors who believed they had control of all facets of owners’ lives.

It took from ’91 to ’93 for the H/W to finish paying off the mortgage on the land—prerequisite of going condo—and to come up with a set of document and covenants that pleased 98% of the owners at the time. We went through a series of re-writes and voted before we arrived at what, essentially, all of us agreed to back in 1994. The documents you hold now have changed little since then.

What has changed is the rate of apartment sales in the Hillsboro Windsor. Before 1994, it could take two or three years to sell a unit. Today they move in two to three weeks. Some apartments have turned over four times in the last decade. Some have turned over 3 times in the past

2 years. And each turnover brings higher prices. On average, property values have tripled in the last ten years.

We are no longer solely a “retirement” community. More than 40% of us are gainfully employed and many now are of childbearing age. And so, life goes on at the Hillsboro Windsor. It is not the same place it once was. What it is today, is will not be in 2014. What does remain is some sense of the community, however vague. The pioneers who came in the 1960s knew they had to work to maintain the property lest it crumble away. There was no combating the tastes of preferences of the newer arrivals coming to Florida and electing to live out West rather than on the beach. But H/W owners did not shirk from keeping up the appearance and soundness of our structures and our grounds. Will that continue to be the case as we head into our 50th decade? I think so and here is why: early 2004 the Hillsboro Windsor greeted the first baby born to a H/W family who resides here all year. A new era has begun.

One way our history can be told is by listing the major repairs to our property alongside some unusual events that come along every once in a while. See the next pages for specifics. For the most part, life here at the H/W is good: *“Another damn day in paradise.”*

Some Events in our 40-Year History

The 1960s

Certificate of Occupancy was in 1964 – Units could be purchased for \$10 to \$15 thousand.

The 1970s

Owners purchased the land from the developer and resold it soon afterward.

During the 1970s, a huge turtle mistook the H/W pool for the ocean. This surprised Windsorites coming for their early morning swim. Police got her back into the sea.

Original Pool Deck (concrete) replaced with “Chattahoochee” decking. Not the wisest choice but a wildly popular option at the time. The deck got hot enough to produce 2nd degree burns. The tiny stones worked loose and made tripping up and painful walking matters of routine.

Beach renourishment in 1972—the first of two thus far. It cost \$1 million and was funded by a bond issue paid off by Hillsboro Beach property owners over the course of many years.

The Great Bahamas Ballon race took place in the 1970s. Ballons began their flight in the Bahamas, traveling westward toward South Florida. The winds began picking up and the balloonists could not keep their craft on track. As soon as they sighted land, they began dropping from the air, their baskets and contents bouncing along the sand and on to Highway A1A, intent on avoiding telephone wires. No one was severely injured. The race was never held again.

Of 94 existing properties in our town, 79 were hooked up to the new sewer lines by the year 1976.

The 1980s

A boat carrying refugees from Haiti ran aground directly off the Windsor's shoreline. Thirty-three lay dead on the beach in '81.

A/C tower replaced in 1985. We were lucky to borrow the crane being used to build Overlook next door. H/W president at the time ordered the top two floors evacuated, fearing the tower might swing into the building. Everybody came out to watch.

Chattahoochee pool decking replaced with tan and beige slate pavers. The pool got new coping and new tiles. The old scrubber system replaced with modern skimmers. The year was 1986.

The garage roof had been leaking for years. The only solution seemed to be to uncover the concrete roof of the garage and seal it from the top. So, the H/W hauled away every last ounce of dirt, shrubbery, grass, whatever, that sat on top of the garage and extended outward to the north and south perimeters of the property. That was in the summer of 1989. Once the roof of the garage was exposed, layer upon layer of asphalt was placed on top of it. It was a year of drought. No rain fell. We could not test how waterproof the new seal was. All year-round residents stared at a sea of black tar surrounding first floor patios and catwalks. Nor could we use hoses to flood the

area due to government restrictions on water use. Finally, we got some rain. And only then were the soil and plantings replaced. We got new red pavers on the north and south patios. To date, this was the most expensive renovation in the H/W history.

The 1990s

On All Hallows' Eve 1991 huge rolling waves generated by "The Perfect Storm" approached across the vast fetch of water from the fishing banks off New England and headed for Florida. The big rollers broke against our pier and dumped sufficient sand on A1A to halt traffic in Ft. Lauderdale. But the perfect storm did not stop revelers at the annual full-costume Halloween party. The Phantom of the Opera was seen, along with a punk rocker sporting neon pink spiked hair and tattoos, and a wicked witch from the North. Their true identities are known to only a few to this day.

1992 brought Hurricane Andrew. It did \$10,000 work of damage to our property. Winds of 70 mph reached the H/W—much below the Category 5 force winds that hit south of Miami. The poolside shower and shed lost a couple of walls. Solar heating system for the pool was knocked out.

The building and balustrades were painted that same year. The pool got a new liner guaranteed for 15 years. Material used was the same as that in water towers or refrigerated trucks carrying liquids.

Fairly extensive repairs to the concrete balustrades were made in 1995. They were patched and painted. About \$30,000 was specially assessed for that job.

In August of 1994, a flotilla of rafters from Cuba sought asylum. On the 26th we awoke to find 3 abandoned rafts on our beach.

The Social Room was enlarged in '95. Walls to what was once a private apartment for us by on-site building manager were knocked down. All of us used to squeeze into an area half the size of our Social Room today when the Board held its regular meetings. It was SRO in those days.

Later that same year, Tropical Storm Gordon and another unnamed TS knocked the roof off the chickee hut and parts of the East and West side of the pool fence.

The second beach renourishment kicked off in 1998. Cost this time was more than double that of 1972. \$2.5 million was paid by special assessment to property owners in our town. Next time it will cost double that ++.

About \$100,000 worth of concrete work was done on the balustrades and decks in '98.

Hurricane Irene caught us by surprise in October 1999. Two good-sized Washingtonian palms near the entrance gate to the pool deck were pushed to the ground and uprooted by the relentless East wind. And the chickee hut lost its roof once again.

The 21st Century

Elevator doors got new stainless-steel facings in the year 2000. Elevator cabs got new wall treatments, flooring, and glass enclosed message boxes.

In 2001 the Social Room was completely renovated to take advantage of the larker space provided by cutting down the walls in 1995. The Lobby was re-done. A French door and compatible color schemes tie the two areas together.

In-house concrete repairs during the summer of 2002 save us many thousands of dollars. We got a great paint job on the balustrades using new elastomer coatings that are pliant and waterproof.

Roof decks on the 8th floor that were cracked and peeling caused leaks into lower floors. Both were totally resurfaced. New picnic tables made of recycled plastic were placed up top and on the south patio BBQ area. Each hexagonal table seats six.

We got a new "main" roof paid for under a warranty from John Manville. The H/W pays only for the removal of the "old" roof whose installation date may have been 1964!

Once again, the pool deck gets a face lift. This was occasioned by the need to get at the leaks down in the garage. We had to destroy about 1/3 of the slate so we updated with apricot-colored pavers on sand.

This paper is based solely on memory and journals kept by both me and my parents, Jack and Merle, who bought here in 1967. It has been printed at my expense. If my recall is inexact, you have my most sincere apologies. —JACI ERICKSON