

St. Lucie resident recalls introducing vacationers to Port St. Lucie

By Joe Crankshaw

Monday, April 11, 2011

The development of Port St. Lucie in the late 1950s provided a job for Ted Burrows that helped him work his way through his first two years at what was then called Indian River Community College.

Although only a teenager, he got a job as a desk clerk for the resort villas of the Port St. Lucie Country Club.

"There were not that many jobs around, but they hired a number of the young people for the club," said Burrows, now 68.

Now known as Club Med, the country club was built on the North Fork of the St. Lucie River closer to Stuart than to Fort Pierce. The country club with its two golf courses, huge meeting facilities and a large number of villas, was used to attract vacationers who might then want to buy a lot in Port St. Lucie, said Burrows, now retired as editorial page editor of The Stuart News.

The villas were two- and three-bedroom houses, completely furnished down to the silverware, china and glasses, Burrows said.

"They even had a golf cart so the guests could get to the golf courses," he said.

Guests either bought their own groceries or dined at the club or in restaurants in Stuart.

Burrows worked at the General Development Company Welcome Center, which functioned as the office for the club and villas, located at the corner of Lyngate and U.S. 1. Guests would register there and be escorted to the villas and club by local young people serving as bellhops.

"The idea was that guests who came for golf or fishing vacations would want to buy lots in Port St. Lucie," Burrows said.

Burrows recalled that the club had parties and dances, at which he and other young people would often perform folk music for the guests.

He said the job was fairly routine except for one evening after midnight as he was closing the center.

"The phone rang. It was a young couple who had gotten off the train in Stuart. They could not find a taxi, the town was closed down, and they didn't know how to get to the club," said Burrows.

There was no one else around, so Burrows locked the doors, got a courtesy van and drove down to Stuart.

"They were very happy to see me. I like to think I did something to help sell the place to someone," he said.

The clerk's job ended when Burrows graduated and went to the University of Florida. After college, he went into the Army where his communication skills got him assigned to the White House as part of the support team that went with presidents to insure they had whatever was needed in communications and public address systems. He traveled with Presidents Richard Nixon and Lyndon Johnson.

After the Army, Burrows earned a master's degree in journalism from the University of Florida, and joined the staff of The Stuart News in 1979. He retired in 2002, but still works for WQCS, the public radio station for Indian River State College.

