

## *Pembroke Pines*

# *Past and Present*

*By Gerry Witoshynsky*



**Pembroke Pines City Hall,  
south view 2001 (Photo by  
Gerry Witoshynsky)**

In February, 1943, F. H. Peterson, a dairy farmer once employed by Henry D. Perry, bought 280 acres of land for \$3,600. In 1954, Mr. Peterson sold 55 acres to Flamingo Development Corporation for \$63,000. The 55 acres were between Pembroke Road and Hollywood Boulevard north and south; Southwest 72 Avenue, the eastern border of North Perry Airport, on the west; and the newly built Sunshine Parkway, or Florida Turnpike, on the east (circa 1957). That was prorated to \$1,500 per interior acre and \$2,000 per acre along Pembroke Road.

Most of the property in western Broward County west of U.S. 441 was used for dairy farms, starting in the late 1920s. Two of the best known were the McArthur Dairy and the Perry Dairy, now remembered by McArthur High School and North Perry Airport in Pembroke Pines, and Perry schools in Miramar. In early 2005, the very last of Wiley Waldrep's dairy cows on the one remaining dairy farm in Broward County were transported from Waldrep's property north of Taft Street and east of University Drive to the Lake Okechobee area. The dairy was annexed by Pembroke Pines and became the Walnut Creek subdivision.

The first homes in what was to become the city of Pembroke Pines were built in 1956, on F. H. Peterson's former dairy property just north of Pembroke Road. Many were expansive three-bedroom homes with swimming pools built on 90 to 125 foot lots. People liked them, so the little neighborhood quickly grew. Some builders added two bedroom homes on 60 foot lots to attract young families who could afford the \$10,000 prices.

In 1952, Louis Sambataro had built homes in the South Broward Ranches sub-division just south of Hollywood Boulevard at Southwest 67th Avenue. The first house sold for \$4,000. In 1954, just north of Pembroke Road, west of the Turnpike, the Pembroke Pines #1 and #2 sub-divisions were started. The average price for a small home was \$9,600 and the three-bedroom, two-bath homes with a pool were priced at \$25,000.

The City of Pembroke Pines is located in Broward County, Florida. It was incorporated in January 1960, after a group of residents which included the Pembroke Pines Civic Association, asked for an election. In 1960, population was 1,429 and the city was one square mile, located between Pembroke Road on the south, Hollywood Boulevard on the north, North Perry Airport (Southwest 72nd Avenue) on the west, and the Florida Turnpike on the east.

Before the city was incorporated, the State of Florida had acquired a very large piece of property just west of North Perry Airport. This was developed as South Florida State Hospital, for the care of persons with mental disabilities, the first such facility in South Florida. Over the years, the institution's uses have changed. Currently it is the Senator Howard C. Forman Human Services Campus. It has also been the home of the Alexander "Sandy" Nininger, Jr. Veterans' Nursing Home; Pines Place, a three-building senior apartment housing complex; Atlantic Shores Hospital; Jose Maria Vargas University; and Susan B. Anthony House. Other city and county facilities on the property are managed by the city, including the new Studio 18 that provides working spaces for artists.

## Historical Outlook

### The Early Evolution of Pembroke Pines Government since 1960

Over the past 33 years, Pembroke Pines has undergone a progressive evolution of its city government. From its incorporation, the government has adapted to accommodate the increase in population, geographic size and the demands of a more regulated urban society. In their new community, the residents and elected officials had to learn by doing, as a brief review of events will show.

On January 16, 1960, an election to incorporate was held and easily passed. A city charter was approved by the voters on May 7, 1960. Almost immediately a lawsuit was filed by resident J. J. Shear, who claimed that the election was illegal. He said the Charter Board had been appointed by the council, rather than elected, making the charter invalid. The city finally admitted it had violated state statutes; it had wanted to establish the charter so that franchises could be issued, allowing construction projects to move ahead. Another wrinkle appeared — it was determined that the appointed election board would have to be elected by the voters. The election board would oversee election of the Charter Board; an election was set for September 10, 1960. On that date, however, Hurricane Donna roared into the area and postponed the election to December 10. Due partly to City Attorney John Steele's resignation, the required four weeks of notice in

the newspapers were not published, effectively canceling the election. A third election date was set for January 14, 1961, with regular municipal elections to be held January 28, 1961.

Now that the election board and the new council were in place, the charter could be addressed for a third time. Evidently the oft-delayed election ballot of January 28, 1961 did not present charter board candidates. Newspaper articles of March 1961, reported an appointed charter "committee" had commenced deliberation of another version of the charter. The city council decided that it would be faster to get the charter by submitting it to the legislature, rather than at a referendum. The charter was written and approved by the legislature as House Bill #1413. It was also voted on by Pines residents on July 29, 1961, and approved by a 263-102 vote. Three charter changes proposed in the spring of 1963 were voted on August 24. They would have eliminated the non-voting mayoral position and instead have the mayor selected from the seven council members. The city manager form of government was also included, along with a measure to prevent recall of a council member during the first year of a two-year term. Although approved by the legislature, the amendments were defeated by the voters in a surprisingly low turnout for a community proud of its excellent voting record.

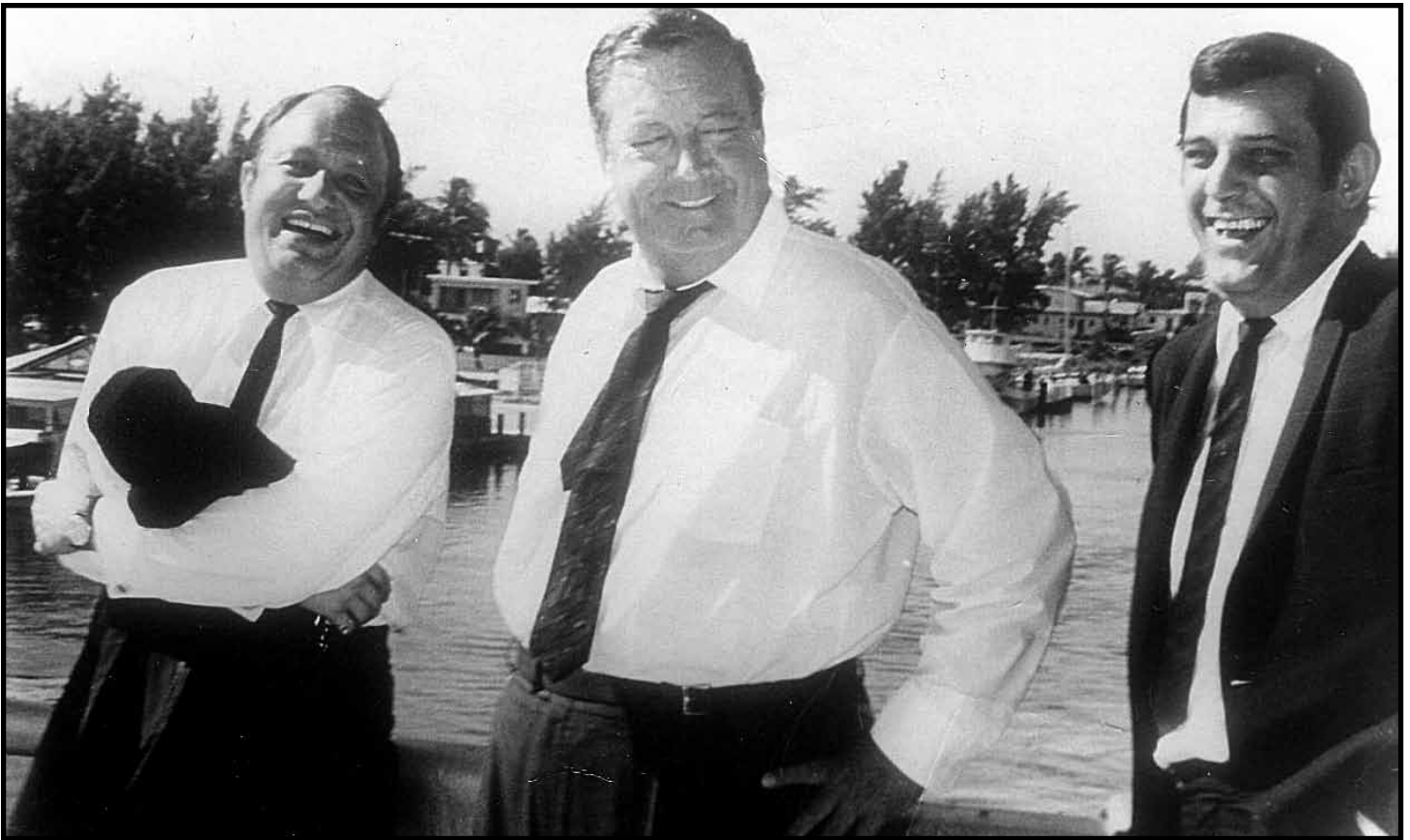
Resolution #180 on the 1965 ballot asked if the residents wanted a city hall and utilities building on city-owned property on Hollywood Boulevard at Northwest 74th Avenue; 814 voted against the plan and 345 voted for the plan. A follow-up question on a later ballot asked if the site should be sold, if a profit could be realized. This was approved. Looking back, the approximately one-acre site would have soon become inadequate for the rapidly expanding city.

The early Pines Charter Board and committees were appointed by the city council. On August 6, 1966, the citizens voted 1,093 to 184 for an elected charter board that would study the charter and propose amendments to keep the document current and tailored to the needs of the community. Five residents were selected to serve on the board.

Another board was now under attack. In December 1966, the Board of Adjustment, whose function was to hear and rule on zoning variances, was criticized for too much independent activity. The city council felt it had no control over the board and could not overturn board decisions. The desire to abolish the board came after Boyd's Funeral Home was given a variance to build a memorial chapel on University Drive. Supporters said the Board of Adjustment was set up to keep politics out of zoning decisions. Resident and attorney Robert Fegers told the council it would violate State Statute #176.03 if it dissolved the board. The State Attorney advised the council it could banish the board, since it had created it in the first place, so they did just that. A resident filed suit on January 20, 1967, to nullify the 24 charter amendments passed on the December 3 referendum, claiming "numerous irregularities." There had been a low turnout of 493 voters out of 3,700 registered. In February, a temporary injunction was issued blocking the city from operating under the newly approved charter regulations. Mayor Widlak said it would not interfere with the operation of the city. The suit was eventually dismissed by Circuit Judge O. Edgar Williams. The 1967 municipal election had created a new majority group on the council. Councilman Robert Helm asked the council to re-establish the Board of Adjustment. Mayor Widlak objected.

The council meetings kept the public interest because of frequent controversy. Newspaper reporters were having a great time on their Pembroke Pines beat — never lacking for a story or a theme for editorial comment. Columnist Ed Seney wrote in the October 1967 *Hollywood Sun-Tattler*:

*Pembroke Pines is a fun place. This city of nice homes and beautiful living has a recreation program second to none. Of course this recreation program is not a product of any recreation department or any such thing as that. The Pembroke Pines citizens get their fun by attending city council meetings. I'm sure the members of the council don't mean for their meetings to be so much fun, but heck, a guy's gotta get things off his chest. And getting things off his chest means that someone else isn't going to like those things, so they also have to get*



Left to right - Lou Marsh, Jackie Gleason, and Tony Adams working on a movie in Dania (Courtesy of Pembroke Pines Historical Museum, Lee Adams Collection)

*some things off their chests. And on and on – Pembroke Pines citizens should be proud of the fact they have such a fun place to go in the evenings.*

It was once said, “With Pembroke Pines, who needs Jackie Gleason?” Another reporter said, “The Pines has had a fairly smooth-running city despite these evenings of oratorical splendor.”

In December 1967, Mayor Widlak suggested splitting the city into wards, because he said some areas had two representatives, while others had none. Later in March 1968, Mayor Widlak proposed setting up a committee that would study ways to protect the city’s interest if they consolidated into one large city. Hollywood City Commissioner Al Montella believed that within ten years only three large cities would exist — Fort Lauderdale, Hollywood and Pompano Beach.

Councilman Ashley Hale said, “I don’t blame Montella for trying to annex us. We’re a pretty darn nice little city. But we’re not going to let anyone take us over.” Councilman Joe Ferraro commented, “I think the motion should read that Pembroke Pines should immediately start

to annex Hollywood.” Montella’s interest in annexation of Pembroke Pines territory was to give Hollywood a corridor for westward expansion from its hemmed-in borders.

A charter amendment on the April 21, 1973 ballot that proposed a four-member council plus the mayor was defeated. What would have been a major change in city government was proposed in 1975. It would have shifted the administration of the city to a strong mayor, who would have the responsibilities currently handled by the city manager, under the council/city manager form of government. The measure was defeated by a vote of 1,853 to 1,400. After a long study by the charter board and numerous public hearings, a streamlined and updated charter was approved by the voters on March 14, 1978.

The city had been annexing various parcels of property in its westward expansion, almost since its incorporation in 1960. On the September presidential primary ballot of 1980, the residents were asked to vote for the third time on annexation of 10,080 acres or 15.75 square miles that would bring the city border to U.S. 27. The vote was 2,381 in favor and 1,507 opposed. Charter Amendment #3

on the March 10, 1981 ballot was approved to provide that council seats should be designated by numbers.

After many unsuccessful attempts to reduce the number of commissioners, as they are now called, a well thought-out plan with a complete blueprint for implementation was presented to the electorate on March 13, 1984, with the strong support of Mayor Chuck Flanagan. This action was an important move forward in the government of the city. It was inspired by the pending development of a huge new condominium complex, Century Village, with an eventual population of 15,000 residents, which would have the potential to dominate city government. A new structure was called for in order to guarantee a balanced representation from all areas of the community.

Four commissioners would be elected from four districts of equal population, and the mayor would be elected at large. As the population center moved, districts would be withdrawn. Seventy-seven percent of the voters agreed with the plan, which would take effect with the March 1985 election. In further refinement of the landmark 1984 change in government, the

1986 election approved four-year terms for the commissioners. An amendment was passed that set forth the procedure for removal of a commissioner who was incapacitated and unable to serve, but refused to resign.

One prickly issue that surfaced a couple of times was water fluoridation. Avid supporters and detractors argued for weeks on the subject. A non-binding straw ballot on the October 1966 ballot approved fluoridation of city water by a 760 to 494 vote. No action was taken to implement the plan; however, the city included money in the budget to buy fluoride tablets for free distribution. By July 1967, only five families had asked for them. The issue was revisited on June 16, 1987, when again voters were asked to decide on water treatment or free distribution of fluoride. The outcome was the same. The March 10, 1992 election ballot included an amendment to abolish the charter board and establish a commission-appointed body. This was approved.

With all the problems previously outlined, plus many more that were not mentioned, it would seem that at times Pembroke Pines was a malfunctioning community, but this was not so. In the early years controversies were common, but at the same time the city was growing and capably handling its affairs. The elections that were called too often in the city's infancy, many of them on Saturdays, finally settled down to one spring election every two years, plus the mandatory fall state and national elections. The Board of Adjustment is doing its duty without interference. The Charter Board, having done its major job of refining the city's operating document, is now appointed



**Kipnis Home, Southwest 69th Avenue at Southwest 13th Street, c. 1982 (Image courtesy of Pembroke Pines Historical Museum)**

by the city commission, on call for any needed revisions. The commission handles its responsibilities without loss of efficiency after its reduction to five members. There will no doubt be a re-emergence of some issues, as certain as the return of bell bottom pants and platform shoes. But, as we observed our 33rd birthday [in 1993], the major kinks in running the city had long been smoothed out, so that future elected officials and residents could feel confident in the stability and fine environment of Pembroke Pines.

### **Three Decades, Four City Halls**

In the fall of 1988, a gleaming new, state-of-the-art city hall was dedicated

in the City of Pembroke Pines. The ultra modern, three-building complex is in keeping with the amazing growth and commitment to the future of the now 50 year old community. While we celebrate this new institution, a brief recall of the previous city halls is of interest.

When the Village of Pembroke Pines was incorporated in February 1959, there were no municipal facilities — these would all have to be created by the pioneer residents. The second ordinance passed by the village's Board of Aldermen was to designate Mayor Walter Kipnis and his wife Estelle's spacious home as the village hall. Late in 1959, the village was dissolved, but the Pembroke Pines Civic Association had started a community center building on Southwest 13th Street at Southwest 67th Way. The land had been donated, and with more donations of materials and residents' labor and a town appropriation of \$2,000, a plain, presentable structure grew. The citizens reincorporated in January 1960, and by late 1960 the center was complete enough to be turned over to the village by the Civic Association to be used for municipal offices. It was valued at \$55,000 and paid for in full.

The building was expanded over the years. The police station annex, built by the department personnel, and a utility department office were added on. A



**First City Hall, completed in 1960, SW 13 Street at SW 67 Way, c. 1980 (Photo by Gerry Witoshynsky)**



Pines City Hall, Taft Street west of Palm Avenue, former showrooms of Pembroke Lakes Subdivision, c. 1976-1988 (Image Courtesy of Pembroke Pines Historical Museum)

second small building served as city department offices, and eventually as the city-operated library.

By the late 1960s, the town's growth was so rapid it was obvious that the hall had become obsolete for government operations. Discussion continued about how to obtain better facilities. Mayor Kipnis's plan for a parcel of land on then Hollywood Boulevard did not meet with the council or residents' approval. Eventually, an offer from the Pembroke Lakes developers to turn over their sales offices at Taft Street and Palm Avenue was accepted, and the City Hall complex was dedicated on November 13, 1976. The price was approximately \$300,000 for a group of four wooden structures on low pilings, connected by walkways and situated next to a lake. The residents of the Pines Village area were unhappy to lose the distinction of having the government center in their midst, but it was inevitable that as the population center of the city was moving west, so must the City Hall. The "old city hall" became a senior citizens center.

The city officials and employees were

pleased with all the room, in contrast to their former crowded facility. The site and tropical pavilion style of the new offices made for a unique city hall. But soon, as was expected, this complex was inadequate. Although they were charming and different, the wooden buildings were hard to maintain and the design was inefficient for business. Once again, the city was looking for a permanent seat of government that would serve its needs well into the twenty-first century.

The call for architectural design bids went out; the final choice was from the firm of Bouterse and Fabregas of Miami, and the cost was to be around \$3 million. The land, at the corner of Pines Boulevard and Palm Avenue, had been donated by Ed Ansin. Much opposition was raised when the architects' rendering was presented. Critics seemed to want something more conservative. Mayor Flanagan and the majority of commissioners stuck to their opinions and votes, and proceeded with the permits and plans. A frustrating delay was caused by the State's declaration that the site was a marsh land, and should be preserved. By promising to create

another wetland area elsewhere, the city was allowed to proceed. The two major architects passed away during the building process and the Architectural Partnership of Pembroke Pines finished the project, with the final cost close to \$4 million.

With a brilliant sun reflecting off the blue mirror-glass surfaces of the three buildings, Mayor Chuck Flanagan, the city commissioners, invited dignitaries and citizens dedicated the new city hall on October 22, 1988. The entire complex was named the Charles Flanagan Government Center and the six-story structure, the Woodward M. Hampton Administration Building. Woodward (Woody) Hampton was the long-term city manager of Pembroke Pines.

Some residents have emphatically stated their dislike of the complex, while others admire it. Beth Dunlop, architecture critic for *The Miami Herald*, described it as ". . . a sophisticated design, audacious and sculptural" and, "In design [the three-story building] is an abstraction of a barn — a nod to the fact that Pembroke Pines, not long ago, was mostly marsh and pasture-land . . ."

Whatever one's opinion, the present city hall is a stunning statement for the city. It cannot be ignored. As years go by, it will be admired and defended, simply because it is ours. Beth Dunlop also said, the new city hall takes "... an important first step toward instilling a sense of identity, a civic pride."

### Residential Development

Pembroke Pines started as a residential community, and remains one today. The types of living areas, however, have changed over the years. The first neighborhood was Pines Village, where individual contractors built single family homes. Later, condominiums were introduced as a new style in residential development.

Pembroke Lakes on Taft Street west of Palm Avenue, designed in the 1970s as a complete neighborhood, contained single-family homes, condominiums and townhouses. Century Village at Southwest 136th Avenue south of Pines Boulevard is a condominium community of 15,000 residents. Other condominiums came on line as these apartment-style complexes appealed to senior citizens. West of Flamingo Road, builders developed gated communities restricted to owners' access. These were popular and after Hurricane Andrew in 1992, had a great surge in growth. Farther west and closer to U.S. 27 and the Everglades, where the land elevation is only a few feet above sea level, single-family homes on one or more acres were built.

Another form of residential development, condominiums, began in the early 1970s. Hollybrook Condominiums, started in 1973 and located south of Pines Boulevard and west of Douglas Road, was the first major project of its kind in Pembroke Pines. Two others followed: Park Place and Colony Point within the Pembroke Lakes master plan community, west of Palm Avenue between Johnson and Sheridan streets.

Current Vice-Mayor Jack McClusky wrote an account of how and why the City of Pembroke Pines changed from a seven-member City Council to a five-member City Commission form of government in a research paper he did in pursuit of his Masters Degree in Public Administration at Florida Atlantic University:

*When the Century Village retirement condo project was proposed, with a potential of 15,000 residents, the current city officials knew that this many senior citizen residents, who usually voted as a bloc, could easily control every City Council seat.*

*The elected Charter Review Board (CRB), entrusted with the drawing up of the city's constitution (called a charter in Florida) that empowered the operation of the city, began studying a new system of electing city officials that would prevent one condo from controlling all the city's council members. A proposal on the 1983 ballot to establish numbered designated seats had been approved. Now the CRB took a further step: the study of*

*creating four districts with equal number of voters in each district electing their representative on the City Commission, and the mayor chosen by all the voters.*

*The CRB contracted with a professor from FAU's political science department to draw up a districting plan. The expert's plan was within the legal framework but did not take into account the political background of Pembroke Pines. It split one condo between two districts, and put two other large condos into one district. It also put some current elected officials into the same districts, sure to cause friction among them and raise their objections to the plan.*

*Current Vice-Mayor Jack McCluskey, having been recently defeated for reelection to the city council in 1982, began his own study of how best to create a districting plan. He developed three plans: 1) Seven members with six commissioners elected from six designated districts, mayor elected at large, two-year terms, elections every year; 2) five members with four commissioners elected from four districts, mayor at large, two-year terms, elections every year; 3) five members with four commissioners from four districts, mayor elected at large, four-year terms, elections every two years.*

*McCluskey felt that Plan #3 was the most effective for the city. Now he quietly discussed the plans with a few CRB members, who happened to be long time friends. McCluskey also approached Mayor Chuck Flanagan and City Manager Woodward (Woody) Hampton, outlining his proposal. Separately they all agreed that Plan #3 was the best.*

*After long discussions at a CRB meeting that included a revised plan from the FAU professor, and public comment, Mayor Flanagan laid on the table the three plans developed by McCluskey, without identifying the author. The CRB voted to accept Plan #3. The CRB's attorney drafted the plan and wrote the ballot question that would go before the voters. Following city charter procedure, the City Council voted to place the item on the ballot.*

*Now the campaign to "sell" the proposal to the public was begun. A political action committee (PAC) was created by Mayor Flanagan with advice*



Statue of the late Red Buttons, nationally recognized stand-up comedian and actor, and advertising spokesperson for Century Village, c. 1970s (Photo by Gerry Witoszynsky)



**The Fury of the Storm, Broward Community College South Campus, January 16, 1991 (Photo by Gerry Witoshynsky)**

*and participation from McCluskey; the mayor became the chief salesman. He convinced the leaders of the major condos that it was in their best interest to support the issue. He spoke at the condos, citizen organizations and candidates' nights. The PAC ran newspaper ads and sent flyers to the voters. On election night Tuesday, March 13, 1984, the citizens learned that a huge 76% majority had voted in favor of the proposed five-member commission.*

The owner of a large tract of land north of then Hollywood Boulevard asked to be annexed to Pembroke Pines; this was approved. Soon another owner asked that his property, west of University Drive and north of Hollywood Boulevard be annexed. The addition of property north of North Perry Airport allowed westward expansion, fulfilling the contiguous property requirement of annexation.

Now, in 2010, about 55 years after the first homes were built, our population stands at more than 150,000. We are the second largest city in land area in Broward County, encompassing more than 34 square miles. One large tract of land, 113 acres just west of City Hall, is in the planning stages for a City Center. This will include government facilities a new city hall commercial sites, a hotel and varied housing complexes. It will have a large patio and park-like area that will

serve as a cultural and social gathering place for the residents.

#### **Educational Institutions - Schools**

The first public school in the new town was the Pembroke Pines Elementary School at Southwest 9th Street and Southwest 66th Avenue. In 1961-62, it was just a group of portable classrooms in an open field, shaded by a grove of live oak trees. Finally, in 1964, a permanent building was dedicated; but because the city was growing so fast, the portable structures were used for many years. To help ease the crowded classrooms, Pembroke Pines became an innovator and started its own charter school system. The system now consists of four elementary schools, two middle schools and one high school. Broward County Public Schools has six elementary schools, three middle schools and one high school within the city boundaries. Additionally, there are many private primary and secondary schools and institutions of higher education within the city, which has always put a high value on educational opportunities.

#### **Educational Institutions - Broward Community College South Campus**

On January 15, 1991, a tornado swept north from Miami-Dade County and across North Perry Airport in Pembroke Pines. Damage was extensive to hangars and planes at Crescent Airways and a modular classroom building at Broward

College South Campus was destroyed. Other buildings were battered and several trees splintered. This natural whirl-wind was mild, however, compared to the political storm that swirled about the founding of the campus in the 1970s.

President Dr. Hugh Adams of then Broward Community College approached the Broward County Commission in the summer of 1970. He knew the 100-acre northeast corner of the county-owned airport was surplus U.S. government property, so he asked the Commission for the free transfer of the site for school use. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) would not allow this; it had final say on airport usage. Instead, it wanted \$3.6 million, based on the "highest and best use," an appraisal formula.

Dr. Adams appealed to the Pembroke Pines Planning and Zoning Board on November 14, 1973, asking it to change the zoning from agricultural to educational, hoping therefore to get a lower price. The request was approved and in early January the City Council validated the change with little discussion.

Suddenly, a flare-up of anti-campus sentiment was orchestrated by a small group of Pembroke Pines residents. Slanderous flyers were distributed, letters to local newspapers written and the neighborhood was agitated into believing the worst possible calamities would occur if the campus was built. Riots, drug use, uncontrolled traffic and "undesirable people" were the objections most mentioned.

The January 21, 1974, Pines Council meeting was packed with opponents presenting a petition containing 140 names. The council reacted by rezoning by a 4-3 vote, and approved by a 4-3 tally, a future public hearing to "hear the other side." Dr. Adams and his staff remained calm and continued to pursue the objective.

Pines Middle School was the site of the February 14, 1974, public hearing that attracted around 400 people. Dr. Adams, Dr. Clinton Hamilton, Dr. Walter C. Young, a former Broward Community College trustee and pioneer resident of Pembroke Pines, and officials from Davie (location of the main campus) attended. They presented their plans for the school, while the protest group raised their

objections. The council members side-stepped any decisions, saying they could not vote outside City Hall.

At its March 1974 meeting, the City of Pembroke Pines Council, by a 6-1 vote, rejected the rezoning and instead adopted a resolution asking the County Commission to rezone the property for recreational use. At the same meeting, the Flamingo West Development Company offered 100 acres adjacent to C. B. Smith Park to the school. Later, Dr. Adams thanked the developers and stated that examination of many parcels in South Broward showed that the airport site was the only one meeting all state criteria.

While negotiating with city and county officials, Dr. Adams also was assuring the FAA that the campus would not lead to closure of the airport, but would instead enhance it with its aviation programs. He looked for approval of the site acquisition and a reasonable price, but nothing was done through the summer and fall.

In December 1974, in response to inquiries to FAA officials, an announcement came from Washington that the land transfer was totally unacceptable and no action had been taken. Later that



**Broward County Community College Lake, 1988 (Photo by Gerry Witoszynsky)**

month, the FAA said the airport would have to undergo an environmental review.

Finally, on February 7, 1975, the FAA notified Broward Community College that the college could receive the property, but the selling price was not mentioned.

In March, the FAA called for a new appraisal, as the previous one dated from 1972. A shake-up at the FAA occurred when FAA Director Alexander Butterfield and former White House security chief for President Richard Nixon, suddenly resigned. June brought a confirmation of the \$3.6 million valuation. A compromise was offered by Broward Community College — indirect benefits such as college aviation programs, could perhaps lower the price. The influence of Senator Lawton Chiles in Washington, D.C. was enlisted, but he could get the FAA to agree to only \$875,000 in indirect benefits.

Meanwhile, the opponents continued their letter writing and other methods of keeping the controversy alive. The City Council asked the South Broward Park District to buy the land at \$30,000 to \$50,000 an acre.

In November 1975, Dr. Adams received the new appraisal — \$1.73 million. With the subtraction of the indirect benefits amount, the final price was \$1,031,000. But now the County Commission stalled, saying they needed to restudy airport needs and find a different site for Broward Community College. However, on December 26, the commission was convinced to accept the college's offer by new administrator Lewis Hester.



**Beach, Pool, and Water Slides at CB Smith Park, a Broward County Park in Pembroke Pines, 1982 (Photo by Gerry Witoszynsky)**





Imported Italian gazebo in Pembroke Lakes Mall, 1993 (Photo by Gerry Witoshynsky)

Headline, *Hollywood Sun-Tattler*, February 24, 1976: “FAA REJECTS BCC LAND PURCHASE.” Stalling once again, the FAA said the October 1975 appraisal did not reflect the land’s fair market value, and the edge of an airport was not suitable for a campus. An April 18 meeting between FAA and school officials was held at the county courthouse to resolve differences.

Finally, on June 3, 1976, Congressman J. Herbert Burke announced from his Washington office that the FAA had accepted the low appraisal, thereby giving its consent to the school’s acquisition of the property.

On Sunday, June 3, 1979, a ground breaking ceremony was held and a target opening date was set for about a year later.

Today, the Judson S. Samuels Campus of Broward College is a prestigious institution in Pembroke Pines. The full-time student enrollment is 1,560 and the 217,000 volume library serves the South Broward area. The landscaped lake with its surrounding exercise course is a magnet for local residents.

Born in a storm of controversy, South Campus is now a respected and welcomed part of the community.

### Recreation

The early residents in the new town knew they had to start something very important for their children in addition to

schools; they needed recreation facilities. The first ball field in Pembroke Pines was set up in a rough vacant field, opposite the town hall on Southwest 13th Street, which was filled with pine trees and rough weeds. City officials asked the county to help out, and so a section of North Perry Airport along Southwest 72nd Avenue, was set aside as the little league athletic

field, dedicated to John F. Kennedy. This is now Paul Maxwell Park. Maxwell was a pioneer resident and elected city commissioner. He became mayor when Mayor Ron Villella resigned to go to Tallahassee to work in Governor Bob Graham’s administration, in 1979.

Parents helped lay sod and became coaches to get the program started. Swimming lessons were held in the homes of residents. Weekend and summer recreation programs were started at the county-operated Recreation Center on then Hollywood Boulevard.

Today, the city has one of the best recreation departments in the county, operating 32 parks and four recreation center facilities that offer softball, baseball, soccer, football, tennis, roller hockey, golf and racquet ball. As the city continued to grow westward, it surrounded an undeveloped parcel of property known as Snake Creek Park. That parcel, which was landscaped and had facilities built, is now known as C. B. Smith Park, dedicated in 1982 in honor of the Broward County Commissioner who in the late 1950s had the vision to save it as open space.

The old city hall was converted into the first senior center, until the beautiful



Kenneth Hughes, Seminole Indian Wars Historian (at left), with Broward County Historical Commission Members in North Perry Airport digs, 1989. (Photo by Gerry Witoshynsky)



**Broward County Archaeological Society Participants in North Perry Airport Digs, 1989 (Photo by Gerry Witoshynsky)**

new Southwest Focal Point Senior Center was established in 1995. The old senior center/city hall was then remodeled into the Village Community Center. Now the Early Childhood Development Center uses the facility. A part of the building is appropriately used as the Pembroke Pines Historical Museum. The city hall on Taft Street is now just a memory, as it was torn down in the spring of 2005. The site is now Ben Fiorendino Pembroke Lakes Park, to honor a former mayor and city commissioner. The first police station was a tiny addition to the old city hall, built mostly by a handful of police officers. Eventually, the city acquired property at 9500 Pines Boulevard and built the current Pembroke Pines Police Department headquarters. Adjacent to the police department is the Pembroke Pines Fire Department headquarters. With its more than 200 employees and six stations, the fire department is rated a Class A organization.

In 1957, the first shopping areas in the city were small strip centers with convenience stores on then Hollywood Boulevard and Pembroke Road, just west of the Florida Turnpike. The major Pembroke Lakes Mall, located at the junction of Pines Boulevard and Flamingo Road, has become a regional attraction for south Broward and north Miami-Dade counties. In 2007, the Shops at Pembroke Gardens outdoor shopping center opened on Southwest 145th Avenue, just east of

Interstate 75 and south of Pines Boulevard. In the early years, residents had to drive to Memorial Hospital in Hollywood for medical care. The city was happy to welcome Pembroke Pines General Hospital in the 1970s, when it opened at Sheridan Street and University Drive. That hospital is now a part of Memorial Healthcare Systems. Memorial Hospital West was built on Flamingo Road,

north of Pines Boulevard and adjacent to the Pembroke Lakes Mall. It has expanded many times to meet the growing population, and added a professional office building and six-level parking garage.

As the post-World War II population exploded, the need for new streets and highways also grew. The Florida Turnpike wended its way through open pasture and pine forests on the eastern edge of Pembroke Pines beginning in 1957. Interstate 75 was constructed, from Miami-Dade County through western Pembroke Pines, and then connected with the former State Road 84, heading west from Fort Lauderdale crossing the Everglades as "Alligator Alley." U.S. 27, dating from 1927, at the far western reaches of Pembroke Pines, became our western border. When the last large piece of acreage was annexed from Flamingo Road to U.S. 27, it took in Holly Lakes Mobile Home community. West of a canal on U.S. 27 is Water Conservation Area #3 and the vast Everglades.

The dramatic economic downturn has caused a temporary halt to the development of the City Center. But, the central location on prime property on our main street should in the near future attract major developers to complete the project. As it has in the past, the city will



**North Perry Field Administration Building and Control Tower, c. 1989 (Photo by Gerry Witoshynsky)**



MetLife Snoopy Blimp and Sea World Shamu Blimp moored at North Perry Airport, c. 1990s. Spectators can go to the rear of the Paul Maxwell Park baseball field and get a close-up view of the blimps as they come and go from their moorings. (Photo by Gerry Witoshynsky)

continue to evolve, updating facilities as needed and adding others that are desired. The city has faithfully followed its slogan: Join us — Progress with us.

### Aviation Hotspot Still Thriving After 68 Years!

One of the truly historic sites in Pembroke Pines is North Perry Airport. This World War II airfield was built on a part of Henry D. Perry's dairy farm, as a satellite of Naval Air Station Miami in Opa-Locka, Dade County.

Located between Pines Boulevard and Pembroke Road (south and north), and University Drive and Southwest 72nd Avenue (east and west), in the City of Pembroke Pines, North Perry Airport has been a popular, highly used facility since the end of the World War II.

Sometime during late 1942 or early 1943, at the height of World War II, North Perry Field came on line. On its wagon-wheel designed runways F4F "Wild Cat" pilots practiced taking off and landing skills for their future destination on aircraft carriers.

When the war ended in 1945, the U.S. Navy refused to return the 640-acre piece of property to its former owner, dairyman Henry D. Perry. The airport continued to be used by small plane owners, with Miramar resident Richard Basinger acting

manager. In 1957, the U.S. Navy issued a quit-claim deed, turning the airport over to the Broward County Aviation Department, where it remains today along with Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport.

Newer residents were often puzzled as to why an airport sat in a residential area, not realizing that the towns of Miramar south of Pembroke Road, and Pembroke Pines to its north, encroached on the airfield, once completely open dairy farm pasture of the pre-war era. Opportunities to create other general aviation airports in more remote locations were not acted upon by the Broward County government and were eventually lost in the rapid post-World War II residential growth in the area.

In 1989, Hollywood resident and Seminole Indian Wars historian Kenneth Hughes had been exploring some areas on North Perry Airport with his metal detector. He was successful in retrieving some World War II artifacts along with Pembroke Pines historian Gerry Witoshynsky, and members of the Broward County Archaeological Society. They excavated .30 and .50 caliber bullet shells, three gun barrels and numerous unidentifiable plane and vehicle parts. A handful of .50 caliber bullets turned up near the control tower site. Since the

ammunition was still live, it had to be disarmed. Several World War II pennies made without scarce copper were also found along with a British-made Rolls razor kit, manufactured of stainless steel. This perfectly preserved kit is a prized item. Cafeteria items once housed in the administration building and control tower were found. One site had household items thought to be from the time the property was used by the Perry family as part of their dairy farm. Some of these artifacts are on display at the Pembroke Pines Historical Museum while others were donated to the Broward County Historical Commission.

Until 2008, the most historic structure in Pembroke Pines was the original



The Sportatorium, c. 1990 (Photo by Gerry Witoshynsky)

administration building and control tower near the airport's main entrance on Pembroke Road, built in 1943. The three-story tower and two one-story wings were used by various businesses over the years. Decades later, in the mid 2000s, the airport management closed the building after heavy roof damage from hurricanes Katrina and Wilma. Efforts by Pelican Airways owner Terry Fensome, Pembroke Pines Mayor Frank Ortis and the City Commission, Broward County Historical Commission and County Historian Helen Landers, and others anxious to save the structure because of its historic value, were unsuccessful. In April 2008, the venerable World War II relic was demolished.

For decades, advertising blimps have operated from the field during the winter months. Seventeen different lighter-than-air craft have been recorded at the airport, sometimes three at a time.

At a grassy part of the property along University Drive, pilots dive down in their vintage one-engine planes to snatch aerial signs and then gun their engines in a steep take-off to hoist the signs skyward for trips along the ocean beaches or over the Dolphins football stadium. This has been an activity at the field since the late 1950s, started by Jimmy Butler and his father.

Along Pines Boulevard, three major South Broward television channels base their news-gathering helicopters near the airport manager's office.

Despite several tragic accidents in its 68-year existence, North Perry Airport has added excitement, style and color to our city, and has been a valuable part of our history!

### The Sportatorium and Points West

The most well known establishment in Pembroke Pines and South Florida in the 1970s and 1980s was the Sportatorium. Those who came in the 1960s and 1970s would know it well, as they were attracted to this roughly built arena where they would be entertained by most of the wildly popular rock music bands that were then the epitome of music entertainment.

The concerts were initiated in 1970 in the 15,000-seat, cement block structure with a corrugated metal roof. It had no air conditioning in its early years and the one installed in 1976 did little to



Miami-Hollywood Speedway Park, c. 1977 (Photo by Gerry Witoshynsky)

cool the building. The few amenities, such as restrooms and concessions, were overwhelmed by the crush of the multitude of hyperactive concertgoers.

The trip to the Sportatorium was an adventure in itself; the road was a narrow, two-lane asphalt Hollywood Boulevard, originating at the ocean in Hollywood and continuing due west to U.S. 27, the north-south route from Miami to Lake Okeechobee. Some of the ticket holders would approach from the east, clogging the "main street" of Pembroke Pines for miles, from the Florida Turnpike and U.S. 441. Others would drive north on U.S. 27 and turn east on western Hollywood Boulevard to reach the Sportatorium.



Willie's Bar, c. 1990 (Photo by Gerry Witoshynsky)

The hippy generation, as the kids were known, thought these concerts were the greatest! They were participating in the "rage of the age": loud, incomprehensible, ear-drum-shattering noise in the Sportatorium, the only South Florida venue available for this type of performance. The acoustics were terrible, according to the musicians and the spectators. Nevertheless, when the youngsters could be in the same building with such superstars as The Grateful Dead and Led Zeppelin, nothing else mattered!

The final show in October 1988 featured country music acts Highway 101, the Desert Rose Band and Larry Boone. The badly deteriorated building was torn down in 1993, and a Sedano's market now occupies the space on Pines Boulevard at Northwest 172nd Avenue.

In its heyday, the Sportatorium was infamous as well as famous, and it will be fondly recalled by concertgoers as an experience of a life-time! My sons John and Mike were two participants. They would come home saturated with strange smoky odors, and once with both rear-view mirrors missing from their car.

Next to the Sportatorium, the Miami-Hollywood Speedway Park was the site of drag races, with the noise of their huge



West Fork Ranch, c. 1990 (Photo by Gerry Witoshynsky)

engines splitting the country air. Non-professionals could bring their “souped up” cars and try them out on the quarter-mile track.

Farther west, Willie’s Bar was a stop for hunters and fishermen going to and from the Everglades. It stood for many years on then Hollywood Boulevard in the vicinity of 190th Avenue. The rusty sign for Willie’s Bar hung for years until the whole ramshackle place was torn down.

Hollywood Inc. land developers held many acres of property on the north side of the Boulevard, under the West Fork Ranch name. Until residential and commercial development reached that far west, landowners would maintain cattle on their rezoned agricultural property and receive a tax break.

From this 1954 beginning, Pembroke Pines spread westward as far as it could go—U.S. 27 and the eastern edge of the Everglades. On its 50th anniversary in 2010, Pembroke Pines is the second largest city in Broward County and has a population of more than 150,000 people.

<sup>1</sup> For further information on the Perry family and the history of this area see Gerry Witoshynsky’s “Memories of West Hollywood: An Interview With Annabel Perry,” *Broward Legacy*, Summer/Fall 1995, Vol. 18, nos. 3-4, pp. 13 – 20.

<sup>2</sup> Mortgage Registry, #572228, 5-7-1954 Document # 55, Abstract of Title Continuation, #184784 for Lot 19, Block 9, Page #2 recorded in Plat Book 35, P. 46, Public Records of Broward Co., Florida.

<sup>3</sup> On October 1, 1973, City Commission (then “Council”) adopted Resolution 656, renaming Hollywood Boulevard to Pines Boulevard within the City Limits of Pembroke Pines. The resolution was to become effective January 1, 1974. [The text refers to both “Hollywood Boulevard” and “Pines Boulevard.” Selection is based on occurrence of an event (e.g., before or after January 1, 1974) or reference to the present tense.]

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Mayor Walter Seth and Mrs. Estelle Kipnis 1961 Scrapbook, in the collections of the Pembroke Pines Historical Museum.

<sup>7</sup> On October 1, 1973, Commission (then “Council”) adopted Resolution 656, renaming Hollywood Boulevard to Pines Boulevard within the City Limits of Pembroke Pines. The resolution was to become effective January 1, 1974.

<sup>8</sup> Ed Seney, South Broward Review, *Hollywood Sun-Tattler*, October, 7, 1967.

<sup>9</sup> *Hollywood Sun-Tattler*, October 7, 1967 (No reporter’s name given).

<sup>10</sup> “Consolidation Study Falls Flat in Pines,” *Fort Lauderdale News*, March 5, 1968.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> McCluskey, Jack, “A Case Study: Organizations and Administrative Behavior,” 1995, Research paper for pursuit of Master’s Degree in Public Administration at Florida Atlantic University.

<sup>13</sup> Dunlop, B. (1988, November 6). “City Halls give Broward towns strong sense of identity.” *The Miami Herald*, p. K5.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> McCluskey, Jack, “A Case Study: Organizations and Administrative Behavior,” 1995, Research paper for pursuit of Master’s Degree in Public Administration at Florida Atlantic University.

<sup>16</sup> Broward Community College is now Broward College.

<sup>17</sup> *Sun-Reporter*, June 3, 1976, p. 11.

<sup>18</sup> *Hollywood Sun-Tattler*, June 4, 1979, p. 1-A.

<sup>19</sup> For further information on North Perry Airport during World War II see Gerry Witoshynsky’s “Bombers Over Broward,” *Broward Legacy*, Winter-Spring 1991, Vol. 14, nos. 1-2, pp. 15 – 19.

<sup>20</sup> *The Miami Herald*, April 29, 2008.

<sup>21</sup> See note 3.