

## THE EARLY BEGINNINGS OF LAKEWOOD SHORES

Lakewood Shores, a two-thousand-acre home development, began as a dream of Carl Brownell, who inherited and purchased land located about an area once known as Brownell's Swamp. Added to it was the purchase of the Schmidt Farm on the west side of Cedar Lake Road. Securing financial backing from Westinghouse Finance Corp. and acquiring a partner, William Cottrell. "Conel" was formed to promote the sale of property. The Lakewood Shores project got underway in the summer of 1966 from a sales and construction point of view. The accumulation of land survey for roads, road construction, etc., took many months in the making before that time. The south end of Cedar Lake was dredged to form what is now St. George's Point. The Beach Club was built during the fall of 1967. Other facilities, like the Racquet Club and Pavilion, beaches, tennis courts, were completed in the 1968-70 period. This was one of the big selling features of the project. Other similar resorts springing up in Michigan all the time just had signs posted--future site of--golf course; site of activities building and restaurant.

Lakewood Shores was heavily promoted in the Detroit area. There was a sales office out Woodward in the Bloomfield Hills area. Here is a quote from an early promotional pamphlet:

*Amid a grove of towering virgin white pines stands the Lakewood Shores Beach Club, noted for its cuisine and warm, friendly atmosphere. From the clubhouse you can look over acres of Merion blue sod to the white sandy beaches of Cedar Lake, or over the marina causeway, neatly Outlined with sturdy white docks, ready for your boat. To this, add a racquet club, tennis courts; snack bar; teen club with dance pavilion; shuffleboard; twelve other parks including nine swimming beaches; complete with barbecue pits, etc.; four stocked fishing ponds; a regulation ballpark with sodded infield and backstop; basketball court; badminton court; a children's play area, all extravagantly equipped.*

*The pamphlet goes on to tell of the stable facilities available for your horse for only the cost of feeding and grooming, the fleet of snowmobiles furnished for your enjoyment, and the fleet of ice boats available at no charge. There was also a free golf clinic offered for your kids. The security patrol operates 24 hours a day and was coupled with a volunteer fire department.*

All this was available to members for a paltry \$35.00 a year maintenance fee! Ah, but trouble was brewing in this paradise. Sales were brisk in the 1968 - 70 period, but road construction and drainage problems on the west side caused a shortage of lot inventory and a loss of sales momentum. The lower cash flow couldn't keep up with mounting expenses and though Westinghouse provided additional financing, it was too little, too late. Relief from creditors was sought and agreed to in December of 1972. Some of this was as low as 25 cents on the dollar and caused bitter feelings toward the development among the local townspeople. Creditors lost heavily. Carl Brownell lost everything. Westinghouse Credit Corp. took over the operation, preventing Conel from going into receivership, and arranged for Terramar Corporation, a Texas based developer of recreational communities, to assume ownership and complete the development.

Securing Terramar as a buyer of unsold properties of Lakewood Shores did not turn out to be the answer to all of the development's problems, but the project was too valuable of an investment for a company not to try. In 1975, Lakewood Shores Beach Club, Inc. as it was originally known, legally became

Lakewood Shores Property Owners Association, Inc. (Association) and the Common properties, {i.e., Beach Club, Racquet Club, Pavilion, parks, green belts, etc.} were deeded to the Association.

When Conel was originally promoting lot sales, buyers were given a representation of the golf course as a private facility dedicated to the exclusive use of property owners and their guests. Property ownership was high and the course was well maintained. Under, Terramar, the privacy rights became eroded, and maintenance was practically non-existent. Discriminatory rates, charges and treatment were imposed against property owners and in 1976, it was actually cheaper to play golf as a non-property owner. A suit was sought to acquire a court order to prevent Terramar from offering or granting the use of the facility to the public. Attempted Negotiations between the Association and Terramar went nowhere. Then stating they felt the location too far from their Texas base among other reasons, Terramar pulled out of their agreement.

At the beginning of 1977, National American Corporation ("NACO") purchased the platted and unplatted property of Lakewood Shores from Terramar and Westinghouse Finance Corporation. This included the golf course, barns, etc. on the west side of Cedar Lake. After approval was secured from various agencies, the Company began operations in July of that year. The golf course was completely rehabilitated, the club pool rebuilt, lots were sold and unfinished or blocked off roads were graded and cleared. The 'horse' barn was remodeled for use as NACO's sales office. In the period, June, 1977, to December, 1979; nearly four hundred lots were sold. However, on December 1979, NACO announced they were discontinuing sales of Lakewood Shores properties. No reason was given but it was felt deteriorating economic conditions led to that decision.

Westinghouse then took over the unsold properties and golf course but did not want to be regarded as a developer. A new manager took over the managing of the golf course and country club kitchen as well as the kitchen at the Beach Club. With financing at record high interest levels and the general uncertainty of economic prospects, it seemed Westinghouse would be around for some time. Some lot owners felt the Association should attempt owning and operating the golf course, but saner minds felt this too risky an undertaking. A local businessman had hopes of owning the property, but that idea did not work out either. In accordance with an agreement reached in 1979, the course continued to be operated on a semi-private basis, with non-members paying twenty five percent more for fees than members. Most members owned their own golf carts, many of the 'gas' carts being stored in the 'cattle' barn.

During these years, the POA, with various managers, was run by an official board, which met monthly in all day Saturday sessions. Office methods were outdated, records kept by hand, and mailings went out with the help of volunteers. It was decided to bring the club into the twentieth century and introduce the computer and modern bookkeeping. A financial crunch in 1984, necessitated the closing of the Beach Club from January to April, using the Beach Club for the annual meeting and cutting the staff. The first two changes have been adhered to ever since. At this time, too, we adopted charging different fees for developed and undeveloped property. It was 1987, before another buyer of the golf course and unsold properties appeared. This was Stan Aldridge who went on to develop the Lakewood Shores Resort.

In the spring of 1985 our present manager, Stan Sufnar, was selected to take over the day to day operations of the Association and to relieve the Board of these time consuming duties. Since that time, many cost-saving measures have been implemented and the management function was completely

revamped. Since that time, Lakewood has enjoyed unprecedented prosperity. Through the initiatives set by the board, more than \$300,000.00 has been spent by the board on various projects to improve and renovate our aging facilities. Although not a proven fact, these efforts must have contributed to the increase in value of Lakewood's properties as a study shows an overall increase in the assessed value of all of the development's properties of more than 175% during this period.

Typical of the attitude of volunteerism many of our residents have; the property owners-initiated action to attack the weed problem in our portion of Cedar Lake. Their efforts resulted in treatments of the milfoil over a period of several years that all but eradicated the nuisance. The board voted to pay half the cost of the application, with the committee of volunteers soliciting property owners for the other half. The project eventually fizzled because of the voluntary system of paying. Fortunately, several years later, an official lake treatment board was formed and the care of the weed problem for the entire lake was undertaken through a property tax assessment.

The drain problem became a major problem during the high water in the lakes around 1986, but it was 1994, before the project was completed. After much work and research, the new drain commissioner, Kevin Przybyla, undertook to re-establish our drain district. Thanks to his tremendous efforts, the drains continue to function properly to this day through a program of regular maintenance. Kevin is, by the way, a resident of Lakewood Shores.

Written by Marge Geeraert; Date unknown