

## Mr. Morrison's History of Windsor Gardens

*By Dennis Payton Knight*

My good neighbor, a keen keeper of interesting information, recently came across some draft chapters of a book by M. D. "Mel" Morrison about the early days of Windsor Gardens. They tell of his time as the original "full-time, full-authority" general manager, after construction ended in 1974, and complete control had been vested in the Windsor Gardens Condominium Association. It isn't clear when he wrote them, but I believe it was a decade or more after his service to the community.

He strived to relate "just how difficult it was to get the Windsor Gardens community and life-style off and running on a satisfactory basis," documenting the "birthing pains" required for the community to succeed and thrive. He used, in his words, "fictitious names ... avoiding any possible identification to any person or persons, living or dead."

In April 1974, Morrison had his first board meeting. Arriving, he found in the conference room a "gutter, downspout, and fittings," The board president explained they were there as sample materials concerning a contract with the original developer to take care of "water leakage" in the underground garage, with the developer to pay the association \$2,500 for the installation, apparently thus settling all damage claims.

It was the first he knew of the problem, but Morrison protested, "You must be out of your minds...!" He argued any water penetration was much more than a nuisance, threatening the structural integrity of the garage. The developer's representatives, whom he creatively named "Mr. Potts and Mr. Kettle," turned on him with the most "violent verbal abuse you can imagine." Morrison got the Board's authority, despite their protests, to move ahead with proper remediation, at the expense of the developer, at costs he guessed would be over a hundred thousand dollars.

On June 7th, 1974, it rained all day, an unusual soaker aggravated by strong winds. The buildings, all constructed of a porous cement block, and with only a thin coating of paint, had a tremendous capacity to absorb large amounts of water, and the wind-driven rain leaked into and damaged apartment interiors. Morrison researched and finally identified a nylon-infused coating developed by a Dutch engineer that could solve the problem. He suggested Windsor Gardens employ its own painting crews to apply it, and to keep them on staff year-round to handle future exterior and interior painting projects, all at a big savings.

He wrote of a dismal trash collection service under a lowest-bidder contract, manned by workers who were 'dirty and smelled terrible," using unreliable, "filthy trucks, putting off a terrible odor." With his leadership, the association acquired two trucks to provide sanitation services in house.

In another situation the developer had, by contract, reserved to itself for twenty years collection of coins and profits from laundry machines. Morrison thought it ridiculous and threatened to circumvent the contract by installing the association's own equipment next to the developers' machines, and offer their use at half the price. The developer quickly

acquiesced and revised the contract to provide for equally sharing the profits, giving Windsor Gardens about \$55,000 per year in additional revenue.

Mel Morrison may have filled in the facts a bit and exaggerated his own credits, but he tells a fascinating story, and regardless, Windsor Gardens is thriving a half century after its birthing pains, still laundered, sanitized, and watertight.