

Fosgate property has new owner

By Ann Dupee

CLERMONT — The entire Chester C. Fosgate Company, including the 1,250 acres east of the town known as "Skytop Grove" and voluntarily annexed into the City of Clermont by Mr. Fosgate several months ago, was purchased last Thursday by Maury L. Carter & Associates of Orlando.

The purchase includes seven other smaller parcels in the South Lake County area, as well as two buildings on Park Avenue in Winter Park, a retail building known as the "Lypar Bulding" and an office building called the "North Park Building."

Daryl Carter, son of Maury Carter and an officer of the corporation, said the closing was effected in a "frantic" 90 days and that the next 30 days would be a period of reflection, evaluation of the purchase and planning for the future, particularly Skytop Grove.

Carter said, "I expect we would pursue some level of permitting and approvals. Developing Skytop is a market driven situation. We are prepared to take whatever steps are necessary, up to and including horizontal infrastructure."

The Carters have seen plans for "The Summit," an 18-hole, 3,500+ unit Planned Unit Development which went right up to the wire of approval from City Council early this year.

The applications for annexation and PUD were withdrawn by the developer the day the City Council was to give final approval. Reasons given were the economic situation.

Carter expressed his firm would like input from the City of Clermont. "We would like to work together to see what you want out there and what is good for everybody." And, he further expanded, if someone wants to buy portions of the land, that would work too.

There are 17 acres of Skytop Grove not in the city. They are located east of Greater Construction, which abuts the Carter property on the east.

Other Fosgate properties now owned by Carter total about 250 acres. The closest one to Clermont is on the north side of Minneola at the intersection of U.S. 27 and CR 561A, bordering the Snarr subdivision.

Four are south of Little Lake Harris near Howey-in-the-Hills, one is on the edge of CR 455 near Sugarloaf Mountain and the final one is near The Trails of Montverde.

Maury Carter was transferred to the Orlando area in 1956 from Cumberland, Maryland. He began buying citrus land in partnership with fellow Martin Marietta employees for investment. His son said they did fairly well in their early investments.

The elder Carter left Martin in 1972 and spent several years in association with Realtor J. Rolfe Davis, who was also a former Orlando mayor, until he formed Maury L. Carter & Associates in 1974.

The focus of the present company has historically been in long term investments in vacant land. Daryl said they derived income from the agricultural products until communities grew to them and the company would then sell and buy land further out.

Until recently Carter owned 6,092 acres in the Wekiva River Basin in Lake County known as Wekiva Sulphur Springs Ranch. It sold to the CARL program, Department of Natural Resources and St. Johns River Water Management District for \$21.4 million.

The purchase price of the Fosgate properties was not disclosed.