

As Arundel Grows West



BY MARVIN JOSEPHI—THE WASHINGTON POST

Second-graders play dodge ball at the year-old Piney Orchard Elementary School. The school helps bring parents and children together in the community.

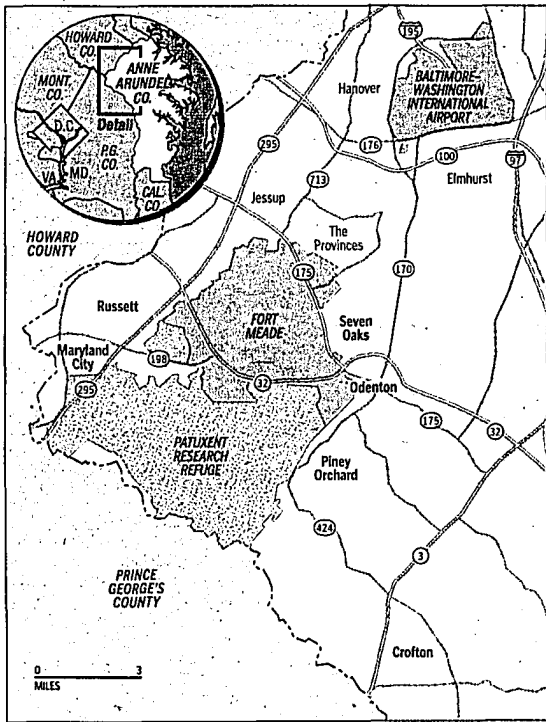
Where There Were Once Woods and Fields, a Community Called Piney Orchard Has Grown Into Its Own Identity

STORY BY KRISTINE ANTONELLI | *Page 10*

PINEY ORCHARD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



Students come and go at Piney Orchard Elementary School, which opened a year ago.



THE WASHINGTON POST



Additional condominiums are being built at Chestnut Point West in Piney Orchard. In 10 years, Piney Orchard has grown dramatically, with its own element

Sense of Community Comes

As West County Continues to Grow, New Worlds Filled With Sub

By KRISTINE ANTONELLI
Special to The Washington Post

Almost nothing looked the same last year when Brycia Kiewlak drove down Piney Orchard Parkway.

She and her husband, Joe, a Naval intelligence engineer, had been gone for four years on an assignment to Australia. In that time, Piney Orchard had grown dramatically—and come into its own as a neighborhood. In place of woods and fields, there were hundreds of town houses and apartments. In place of construction dust and dump trucks, there was a community with its own elementary school, its own shops and restaurants, its own farmers market.

Its own sense of identity.
"A whole new world had opened up," marvels Brycia Kiewlak.

In 1991, she and her husband were among the first families to move into Piney Orchard, a development of 4,700 homes and apartments being carved out of 2,000 acres of woods just south of Odenton. Back then, western Anne Arundel County was just beginning to be transformed by Piney Orchard and two other large developments, Seven Oaks and Russett, clustered around the edges of Fort

Meade.

It didn't take long for the construction to have an effect. Between 1990 and 2000, West County's population skyrocketed by 60 percent, making it the fastest growing area of the county, according to U.S. Census data released earlier this year. And more people are on the way—so many more that the county is struggling to keep pace with the need for new schools and services.

But even as West County braces for additional growth, neighborhoods such as Piney Orchard are already maturing into genuine communities.

At the Orchard Cafe in the Piney Orchard Marketplace, Pamela Crawford weaves between the tables of the narrow restaurant, serving her crowd of regulars eggs, French toast, coffee and juice.

"Hi, there," she greets one customer. "How was your dentist appointment?"

"I got my new crown in," the woman replies.

Crawford has worked at the restaurant, which occupies the same shopping center as a Food Lion, video store, dry cleaners, hair salon and pizza place, since it opened two years ago. She is the only daytime waitress and knows just about everyone who comes in.

"I love working here," she says. "It's a nice

neighborhood, and the people are nice."

Piney Orchard's community center, once just a small building on Stream Valley Drive, has grown to include a larger gym and pool. A second pool has been built, along with tennis courts, playgrounds, a nature preserve with hiking trails, and a lake. There's a day-care center and senior citizen housing.

Young couples can rent their first apartment here, buy their first home, raise their children and enjoy their retirement years in Piney Orchard.

"You can live and die here in Piney Orchard," says Matt Finley, a retired Army colonel who lives here with his wife and two daughters.

Sounds like everything brothers Albert and Ephraim Winer dreamed it would be 50 years ago.

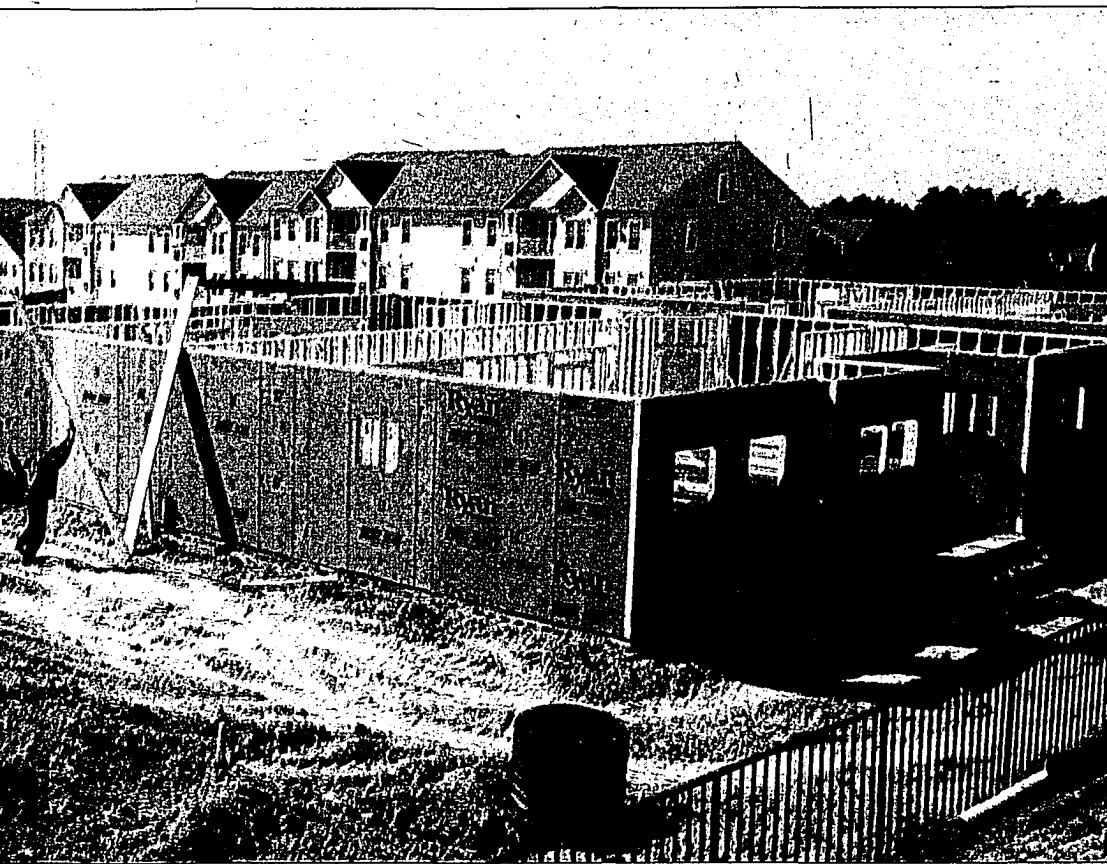
A Dream Deferred

"I remember them, sitting around in this office," says Jay Winer, who was one of the original developers of Piney Orchard and is now president of A.J. Properties in Odenton. "They would be talking about how the place would look."

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Joe Di Pietro regularly drives from Crofton to read a book at the Piney Orchard Visitors Center. Piney Orchard celebrated its biggest milestone as a community one year ago when Piney Orchard Elementary School opened.



PHOTOS BY MARVIN JOSEPHI—THE WASHINGTON POST

Orchard has grown dramatically, with its own elementary school, shops and restaurants, farmers market—and, now, its own sense of identity.

Community Comes to Piney Orchard

Worlds Filled With Suburban Amenities Open Up for Residents

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Winer’s office, near the entrance to Piney Orchard, was once a waiting station for the

old WB&A Railroad. As he talks, he takes out a black-and-white photo of his father, Albert, and uncles, dressed in suits and ties and posing on a 1950s-style circular vinyl sofa. Winer’s office is furnished 1950s-style. He still uses his father’s wood-laminated desk.

Albert Winer started out as a cabinetmaker in Baltimore before he and his brothers opened National Plastics Product Co., now Nevamar Corp., in Odenton in the 1950s. They wanted to build a company town where their employees—about 1,500 at the time—could live, work and play. They hired an architect who found the perfect parcel of undeveloped land: Pine Orchard.

Their original plan called for 900 homes—ranchers with roomy back yards for weekend barbecues. But the project bogged down over how to bring public water and sewer to the community and other development details.

By 1971, when Jay Winer began working on his father’s dream, nothing had changed. It took another 20 years and a new developer, Constellation Real Estate Inc., for Piney Orchard’s first homes to be built on Day Spring Court.

Brycia Kiewlak remembers those first days in her new town house. As their moving van was being unloaded, private security officers questioned them. What were they doing?

“We were only the third family to move in, and I guess they weren’t used to seeing that,” Kiewlak laughs. Her home, on the same row as the model, generated many unexpected visitors.

“We would be sitting in our living room with company over, drinking a beer, and suddenly the door would open, and people would walk right in and start looking around. They thought it was the model. The developer finally gave us a sign to put up saying that it was a private residence.”

Growing Demand for Services

By then, West County was on the verge of explosive growth. It wasn’t hard to understand why. Halfway between Baltimore and Washington, the area offered easy access to the Baltimore-Washington Parkway and Interstate 95 as well as MARC and Amtrak trains. It was also minutes away from major employers: the National Security Agency, Goddard Space Center, Baltimore-Washington International Airport.

A decade later, the developers of Piney Orchard, Seven Oaks and Russett are still building. When they are finished, there will be almost 12,000 single-family homes, town houses, condominiums and apartments stand-

ing in place of woods and fields.

Census figures show the population around Odenton ballooned from 12,833 in 1990 to 20,534 in 2000. Crofton has been growing almost as quickly, gaining nearly 7,000 residents during the same period. Those numbers will continue to rise, especially as a multimillion-dollar project to replace 2,600 run-down base houses on Fort Meade gets underway.

As West County’s population grows, so does its demand for services. The county opened a 14,000-square-foot library on land donated by the developer of Russett three years ago and is gearing up to build a \$13 million, 40,000-square-foot regional library at Route 175 and Piney Orchard Parkway. A \$12 million West County aquatic center has been proposed by County Executive Janet S. Owens (D), who describes the area as “the heart-throb of the county.” But the aquatic center has not been funded.

Earlier this year, Anne Arundel Community College announced plans to build a \$10 million West County satellite campus on four acres at Arundel Mills, the new megamall in Hanover. But the school system has had trouble keeping pace with surging enrollment. It opened Meade Middle School in 1997 and Piney Orchard Elementary last year. This year, the school board is seeking \$8.5 million toward construction of Seven Oaks Elementary and \$2 million for an addition and renovations to Arundel High School. It also indicated an urgent need to begin planning another elementary school in Gambrills.

Parents in Crofton have begged the school system to build a 13th high school—at a cost of \$64 million—on land it purchased years ago in their town. But the school board doesn’t agree that another high school is needed—at least not yet.

Place to Call Home

Piney Orchard celebrated its biggest milestone as a community one year ago. After years of planning and months of construction delays, Piney Orchard Elementary School opened its doors on Oct. 23, 2000, to 317 students.

The first days were chaotic. Construction crews still unpacking boxes and hooking up computers mingled in the hallways with excited children who had spent the first month and a half of school attending classes in trailers at MacArthur Middle School or in crowded classrooms at Waugh Chapel Elementary.

“Some of the furniture had not even been put together yet,” says Principal Edwin F. Booke III. “But everyone was happy to be here, and that really makes a difference.”

Like any elementary school, it brings neighborhood parents and children together for concerts and book fairs, basketball games and Brownie troop meetings, fundraisers and festivals. Residents say its presence has made their community, still under construction, feel much more complete.

From his office just outside Piney Orchard, Jay Winer has watched Piney Orchard’s transformation with pride. Not long ago, Winer’s 26-year-old son and daughter-in-law went house hunting. He works in Alexandria. She works in Baltimore.

To Winer’s amazement, the young couple bought a town house across the street from Piney Orchard Elementary. It is, they told him, a great neighborhood in a great location.

“We did good,” says Jay Winer, who believes his father and uncles would be thrilled by what Piney Orchard has become. “My only regret is that they didn’t live to see all of this.”