

# NEWSLETTER#27

CFS PROPERTIES IS AGAIN CONTACTING LOTOWNERS OFFERING TO BUY YOUR LOT FOR \$250 IF THE TAXES ARE PAID. HE HAS HAD A POSITIVE INFLUENCE ON THE HOME MARKET IN PORT LABELLE. HE HAS BOUGHT SEVERAL HOMES THAT WERE VACANT AND RUN DOWN AND FIXED THEM UP AND SOLD THEM FOR A SMALL DOWN PAYMENT AND CARRIED THE PAPER HIMSELF. HE TELLS ME HE DOES THIS TO GET HOMEOWNERS IN THE HOUSE AND HOPES THEY WILL TAKE PRIDE IN OWNERSHIP AND TAKE CARE OF THE PROPERTY. YES I HOPE HE MAKES MONEY AND BRINGS THE PRICE OF ALL REAL ESTATE IN PORT LABELLE UP WHERE IT SHOULD BE. I'M NOT TELLING YOU TO SELL YOUR LOT(S) TO HIM BUT IF YOU DO I HAVEN'T HEARD OF ONE PERSON WHO DIDN'T GET PAID WHAT THEY WERE PROMISED.

IN THE LAST FEW WEEKS GOVERNOR BUSH CUT THE START TIME ON THE COMPLETION OF FOUR LANEING OF HWY 80 TO FT. MYERS FROM YEARS TO MONTHS IN AN EFFORT TO STIMULATE THE LOCAL ECONOMY. THIS IS NOW SUPPOSE TO BE COMPLETED ABOUT FIVE YEARS AHEAD OF SCHEDULE WHICH I THINK WILL HELP THE SALE OF PORT LABELLE LOTS TO PEOPLE WHO WORK IN FT. MYERS BUT CAN MAKE A 30 TO 45 MINUTE DRIVE HOME TO THE PEACE AND QUITE OF COUNTRY LIVING. IT IS CHEAPER TO BUILD IN HENDRY COUNTY THAN LEE COUNTY BECAUSE OF ALL THE FEES IN LEE COUNTY PLUS THE BUILDING LOTS ARE SO MUCH CHEAPER IN PORT LABELLE.

IN OCTOBER OUR WATER RATES CAME DOWN \$5.00 PER MONTH AND WE ARE ABOUT READY TO START CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW ADDITION TO AND UPGRADE OF THE OLD WATER PLANT. THE BIG THING, THE MONEY, IS IN PLACE TO PAY FOR THIS NEW ADDITION.

ON SUNDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2001 HABITAT FOR HUMANITY OF HENDRY COUNTY DEDICATED THE FIRST HOUSE WE BUILT IN LABELLE TO ANGELINA SCELFO AND HER SONS. THANKS TO SOME OF YOU WHO DONATED YOUR LOT TO HABITAT WE ARE PREPARING 2 MORE LOTS TO BUILD HOUSES ON. HABITAT CAN BUILD A HOUSE BUT IT TAKES A FAMILY TO MAKE A HOME.

WE HAD OUR 29<sup>TH</sup> WEDDING ANNIVERSARY ON SUNDAY DECEMBER 9<sup>TH</sup> AND WE HAVE LIVED IN THIS HOUSE 28 YEARS. IN ALL THAT TIME WE HAVE TALKED ABOUT TAKING THE HENDRY COUNTY CITY /FARM TOUR WHICH IS SPONSORED BY THE HENDRY COUNTY CITY FARM TOUR COUNCIL. THE FARM TOUR COUNCIL IS MADE UP OF MEN AND WOMEN FROM ALL WALKS OF LIFE IN SOUTHWEST FLORIDA. THEIR HOPE IS THAT BY THE END OF THE DAY EVERYBODY WILL MORE FULLY APPRECIATE THE IMPORTANCE OF AGRICULTURE IN YOUR LIFE IN TODAY'S WORLD.

WELL SATURDAY DECEMBER 8, 2001 WE FINALLY TOOK THE TWENTY SECOND FARM TOUR AND I WANT TO TELL YOU SOME OF WHAT WE SAW AND DID AS WELL AS PASS ON TO YOU SOME OF THE INFORMATION WE RECEIVED.

THERE WERE FOUR (4) BUS LOADS OF US. MOST WERE FROM LEE COUNTY AND ONLY ONE (1) BUS LOAD FROM HENDRY COUNTY. THIS TOUR COSTS \$40 PER PERSON AND IS SOLD OUT WEEKS IN ADVANCE.

THE BUSES CAME FROM FT. MYERS AND THE TOUR STARTED IN LABELLE AT DAYLIGHT (ABOUT 7:00) WITH OUR 1<sup>ST</sup> STOP AT LABELLE PLANT WORLD WHERE THEY GROW VEGETABLE PLANTS FROM SEED TO BE SHIPPED TO FARMERS FOR TRANSPLANTING TO THEIR FIELDS. LABELLE PLANT WORLD GROWS AND SHIPS ABOUT 30 MILLION VEGETABLE PLANTS EVERY SIX WEEKS. THEY HAVE 2 SEED MACHINES THAT PLANT THE SEEDS INTO STYROFOAM GROWING TRAYS FILLED WITH GROWING MEDIA AND FERTILIZER IN THE PROPER AMOUNT. THESE MACHINES DO MANY HUNDREDS OF SEEDS PER HOUR INTO TRAYS THAT THEN GO INTO ONE OF 51 GROWING HOUSES. THE HOUSES HAVE AUTOMATIC WATERING AND FERTILIZATION SYSTEMS THAT BRING THE GROWING CONDITIONS UNDER THE CONTROL OF A VERY FEW PEOPLE. THE MOST COMMON SEEDS GROWN ARE TOMATOES, WATERMELON, PEPPER, CABBAGE, CAULIFLOWER, EGGPLANT, ONION AND TOBACCO. MANY OTHER CROPS ARE SEEDED HERE BUT THESE ARE GROWN IN THE MOST VOLUME. LABELLE PLANT WORLD HAS SPECIAL TRAILERS BUILT TO HAUL THE TRAYS FROM THE GROWING HOUSES TO THE FARMER OR TO THE TRUCK LINE FOR SHIPMENT TO FARMS FOR TRANSPLANTING IN TEXAS, OHIO, NORTH AND SOUTH CAROLINA AND PENNSYLVANIA TO MENTION A FEW. IN 2000 HENDRY COUNTY HAD \$15,000,000 IN VEGETABLE TRANSPLANTS & NURSERY SALES.

OUR 2<sup>ND</sup> STOP WAS SOUTH OF LABELLE AT BOB PAUL CITRUS WHICH IS A 5,000 ACRE CITRUS GROVE THAT WAS FIRST PLANTED IN 1964. THE PAULS MOVED TO HENDRY COUNTY FROM CENTRAL FLORIDA BECAUSE OF THE TEMPERATURE ADVANTAGE IN THE WINTER. THEY HAD OBSERVED THAT CITRUS MATURED EARLIER AND WITH HIGHER QUALITY THAN CITRUS FROM CENTRAL FLORIDA. MOST OF THE LOCAL CITRUS GOES INTO JUICE CONCENTRATE. DUE TO THE OUTBREAK OF CITRUS CANCKER DISEASE IN SOUTHWEST FLORIDA 3 YEARS AGO WE WERE NOT ALLOWED TO VISIT THE GROVE. ALL 4 BUSES HAD TO GO THROUGH A CHEMICAL SPRAYER TO EVEN GO TO THE OFFICES.

THE 3<sup>RD</sup> STOP WAS FURTHER SOUTH OF LABELLE ON HWY 29 AT CITRUS BELLE JUICE PLANT FORMED IN 1973 WITH A CAPACITY TO JUICE 3 MILLION BOXES OF ORANGES AND GRAPEFRUIT FROM DECEMBER TO MAY. JUST RECENTLY CITRUS BELLE HAS COMPLETED AN EXPANSION OF THE PLANT TO JUICE ABOUT 7 MILLION BOXES OF ORANGES AND GRAPEFRUIT DURING THE SEASON WITH ABOUT 85 EMPLOYEES. THEY CAN ALSO PROCESS MANY OTHER TYPES OF JUICE. THIS IS A HIGHLY MECHANIZED OPERATION TO PRODUCE JUICE CONCENTRATE PLUS USE EVERYTHING IN THE CITRUS WITH NOTHING BEING THROWN OUT. THE BY-PRODUCTS INCLUDE DRIED CITRUS PULP USED IN CATTLE FEED, COLD PRESSED OIL USED IN CONFECTIONS, ESSENCE OR AROMA ADDED BACK TO THE CONCENTRATE, PULP WASH SOLIDS AND BEVERAGE BASE USED IN MANY OF OUR SOFT DRINKS. YOU BUY THE JUICE CONCENTRATE AND ADD 3 CANS OF WATER. IN 2000 HENDRY COUNTY HAD 99,437 ACRES IN CITRUS WITH SALES OF \$133,538,910.

NEXT WE WENT SOUTH ON HWY 29 TO HWY 832 AND THEN EAST TO VISIT THE ALICO RANCH WHICH IS ABOUT 90,000 ACRES. TO GET TO THE CATTLE PENS WE PASSED THROUGH MANY MILES OF NATURAL TIMBERLAND