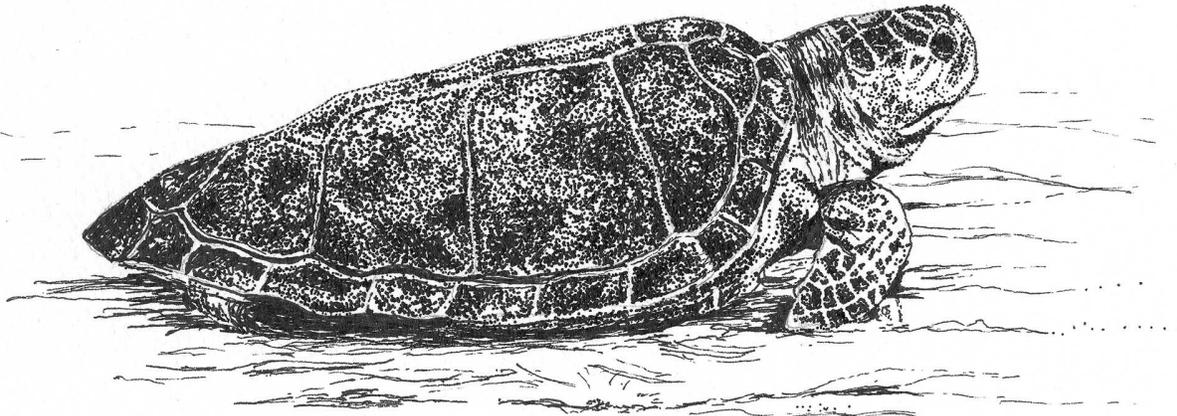


# ARCHIE CARR NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE



**25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary 1991-2016** *Liz Lamb*

Memories from the founding and early days of the  
Archie Carr National Wildlife Refuge

Llewellyn M. Ehrhart  
Hilary Swain  
Paul Raymond  
Duane E. De Freese  
Gerald "Jerry" Heyes  
Paul Tritaik  
Dorn Whitmore

April 30, 2016

## The Carr Refuge Concept: Origin and Beginnings

Llewellyn M. Ehrhart, Professor Emeritus

The singular, initial event, which formed the specific origin of the Carr Refuge concept, occurred at the headquarters of Brevard's other great Refuge, the Merritt Island NWR. I was studying mammal populations on the Refuge, live-trapping rats, mice, shrews and skunks. That someone would actually study skunks in the shadow of the gantries of pads 39A & 39B was viewed with amusement by some in the local media and they had quite a bit of fun with the idea, in print. While engaged in the mammal work I found myself in the headquarters of the Refuge one day in 1973. The Refuge biologist, Jim Baker, came in and said that he had just discovered that, to his (and everyone's) surprise, there were sea turtles nesting out there on the Space Center beach. He had no idea about what species of turtles were there, nor how much nesting activity was occurring. We began immediately to organize a research program that would provide objective data that would elucidate the status and abundance of the threatened/endangered reptiles nesting on the KSC beach. Dr. Archie Carr, of the University of Florida, provided tags and encouragement and the Refuge staff, under Manager Bob Yoder, provided essential logistic support that allowed us to build a well-structured, effective program. That qualified us for a grant from the Corps of Engineers, to study the effects of one of the region's earliest beach nourishment projects, at Indialantic/Melbourne Beach, on marine turtle nesting. Paul Raymond, a young biologist trained on the KSC beach, assumed the leadership of that project and showed that, in 1980 and 1981, only 28% of the females emerging to nest could actually do so successfully on the restored beach. Importantly, Raymond became aware of prodigious nesting activity (mostly loggerheads) that was occurring on the 21 kilometers of beach between Melbourne Beach and Sebastian Inlet.

We shifted our operation to the South Brevard beach and, because of the experience and program organization gained at KSC, were able to begin full-scale, systematic, season-long surveys immediately, in 1982. Within a few years it became clear that the South Brevard beach was one of the best (and probably THE best) on the entire rim of the Atlantic. Once its importance was recognized, a campaign to provide protection for the nesting habitat was mounted and legislation to do so was passed by the U.S. Congress in 1989.

Now, 25 years later, loggerhead nesting is stable at a level 20% greater than it was in the 1980s; the green turtle rookery has recovered in astounding, exponential proportions (with 40-45% of all of the state's nesting occurring at the Carr Refuge, annually); and now we have a new leatherback rookery, small as yet, but trending in a highly positive manner. We have much to celebrate at this auspicious juncture. Many thanks.

## “The Archie Carr NWR and the Brevard EEL Program; an audacious endeavor”

Hilary Swain

The early days of the Archie Carr National Wildlife Refuge NWR were deeply intertwined with the establishment of the Brevard County EELs program. The two projects, one federal, one county, were launched at almost the same time. Nesting sea turtles and coastal habitats, the fundamental justification for the Archie Carr NWR, were also key components of public support for passage of the 1990 county referendum that founded the EELS program. After EELs was established, seven members of the public were appointed to the county’s EELs Selection and Management Committee (myself Hilary Swain, Margaret Hames, Randy Parkinson, Ross Hinkle, Paul Schmalzer, Ken Friedland, Dave Cox) and staff Duane DeFreese. The committee focused initially on reviewing and selecting the lands needed for acquisition projects representing four great ecosystems running the length of Brevard County: Maritime Hammocks (coastal dunes and hammocks of the barrier island); scrub habitats of the Atlantic Ridge; lands along the Indian River Lagoon; and the vast St. Johns marshes. The Maritime Hammocks project was both inspired by, and contributed to, the Archie Carr NWR, and was distinguished by multiple parcels of land that required a very complicated acquisition partnership to achieve conservation success.

The Archie Carr NWR and the EELs Maritime Hammock projects on the south beaches included lands that spanned dune to hammock to lagoon. Some EELs parcels lay within the boundaries of the proposed Archie Carr NWR, while others were outside the boundary but complementary. While the Archie Carr proposal focused necessarily on sea turtles and other federally threatened and endangered species, the EELs program broadened the conservation focus to include the rare and highly threatened habitats of the hammocks west of the beach, and typically west of A1A.

For the EELs committee members there was the absolute joy of many field visits to these hammocks of the barrier island to describe natural communities, compile species lists, assemble the biodiversity arguments, and look for landscape linkages. They scoured the literature, compiled surveys and reports, and drew from their combined scientific and conservation knowledge to assemble powerful arguments for public acquisition. The county submitted the Maritime Hammocks proposal to the state Preservation 2000 program where it remained highly ranked, enabling a 1:1 state match for county funds.

The proposed acquisition plan was audacious. Although Archie Carr NWR and EELs had attracted attention and funding commitments at a local, state, and national level, both public and private funds, reasonable realtors looked at those early maps, showing targets for acquisition on some of the most valuable real estate in the county, encroaching development on all sides, and asked “is this actually possible?” Even an eternal conservation optimist might have harbored quiet doubts. Duane DeFreese and county staff aided by The Nature Conservancy, acting as agent for the state and county, bore the brunt of this tremendous acquisition challenge, juggling myriad partnerships including the instrumental role of the Mellon Foundation. Slowly, and almost unbelievably, the ecological jigsaw fell into place, as parcel by parcel the Archie Carr NWR, EELs, and other state acquisitions were completed. The lines on the modern maps are blurred now, but those who were involved in those early heady days still see the battle lines of a hard-fought, almost cliff-hanger acquisition campaign, which even now is not entirely over. And that was just the start, the next chapters in the evolving story of the Archie Carr NWR and EELs lay ahead—land management and public access.

## Early Memories of the South Brevard Beaches

Paul Raymond, one of Doc's UCF grad students from the early 1980s

I initially worked (if you could call turtling on a gorgeous uninhabited beach work) as an undergrad for Doc Ehrhart on the KSC beaches from 1978 thru 1980, and like so may others became fixated on sea turtles. I was absolutely fascinated by this prehistoric reptile that lumbers up on a solitary beach to do her business. Basically I was hooked on these critters. I also greatly admired this man that everyone called Doc, whose genuine passion for sea turtles is as fresh today as it was in the 1970s. In 1981, I started my UCF graduate turtle research on the impacts of beach renourishment in south Brevard.... which meant I had to leave the familiar KSC beaches and work solo, as Doc and his students continued their KSC turtle work in north Brevard. My initial impressions of the south Brevard beaches during my first month in May 1981 was "damn, there are a lot more turtles nesting down here and the raccoons aren't getting the eggs" (raccoons dug up virtually all the unprotected nests on the isolated KSC beaches back then). I'd give Doc telephone updates throughout the nesting season and if I recall correctly, late in the 1981 season he came down to see for himself and ran some early morning surveys down to Sebastian Inlet. We were amazed at the vast number of crawls of loggerheads (green turtles were a rarity back then). Shortly thereafter, Doc packed up the UCF crew, moved into the Holiday Haven bunkers next door to me and refocused his efforts in what would eventually become the Archie Carr Refuge. My early memories of that stretch of beach that went from Melbourne Beach to Sebastian Inlet was one word: "productive". Here was a high energy beach that was functioning properly to put millions of hatchlings in the water. We still had our problems with beachfront lighting, beach renourishment, coastal development, etc but those were solvable manmade issues.

Throughout the sea turtle world, every sea turtle enthusiast kinda believes their stretch of "turtle beach" is the most important, whether it be in NC, GA, , south FL, Brazil, Mexico, wherever... it's only a natural, possessive, self-serving human trait. Ahhh, but here in south Brevard..... here we knew....this was the real deal, the turtle bombdiggity. Now flash forward to today, where we have the Archie Carr Refuge thanks to Doc Ehrhart and so some many dedicated biologists, government agencies, unwavering turtle advocates, and some good old common sense that says protect the beach and they will come. And return, and return....

Are you a turtle?

## The Early Days of the Archie Carr National Wildlife Refuge:

### Bold Vision – Historic Outcomes

Duane E. De Freese, Ph.D.

#### Thoughts on the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Archie Carr National Wildlife Refuge

On the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Archie Carr National Wildlife Refuge, my memory is flooded with stories of the organizations, partners, scientists, business representatives and citizens that embraced a vision to create the most important sea turtle refuge in North America and the western hemisphere. But as I recall the early years of the Archie Carr National Wildlife Refuge (ACNWR), my mind is drawn to the present time as we contemplate the ecological future of the Indian River Lagoon in 2016, after 5 years of algal blooms, water quality declines and lost biological diversity. Geographically, hydrologically, ecologically and historically the ACNWR and the IRL are linked. So rather than recall some of the stories of the day, I thought I would share some lessons learned from the early days of the ACNWR that we should embrace today as we embark on a new ecosystem-wide restoration initiative for the Indian River Lagoon.

#### SCIENCE SHOULD DRIVE PROGRAM VISION, PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

The ACNWR initiative and lands chosen within the ACNWR boundary were based on the historic annual sea turtle nesting data of Dr. Llewellyn Ehrhart and the University of Central Florida sea turtle research team. These scientific data were the foundation for Congressional dedication of the ACNWR. This national vision for sea turtle conservation was complemented by a local and regional vision for barrier island ecosystem conservation developed by the Land Selection and Management Committee of the Brevard County Environmentally Endangered Lands Program. The EEL Program's scientific evaluation of the entire barrier island ecosystem was the driver for an expanded vision for the ACNWR that included a westward expansion of the functional boundary of the refuge to include the best remaining Indian River Lagoon/barrier island natural habitats and resources. Lesson learned: Scientific knowledge and a bold vision are the foundation for ecosystem-scale conservation success.

#### VISION, LEADERSHIP AND INVESTMENT FROM THE INDEPENDENT SECTOR CAN SHAPE A NATIONAL CONSERVATION LEGACY

The Richard King Mellon Foundation (RKM) donated \$25 M to The Nature Conservancy in 1983. At the time, it was the largest grant ever made by a private foundation for conservation purposes. The Nature Conservancy was the first conservation organization to facilitate the transfer of lands specifically for conservation within the ACNWR. The purchase was from a "quiet" subsidiary company (Compass Rose Corp) which was part of The Walt Disney Company in 1986. When the Richard King Mellon Foundation entered into active land acquisition as part of their American Lands Conservation Program in 1988, they became the genesis for land acquisition success for the ACNWR. The importance of their acquisition of more than 60 parcels of beachfront properties and endangered coastal scrub at a cost of approximately \$40 M cannot be overstated. The vision of RKM Trustee, Mason Walsh Jr., and Patrick F. Noonan (founder of The Conservation Fund) was coupled with sage legal counsel from Brevard County Attorney, Leonard Spielvogel and surgical real estate negotiation by the late Dan Bellucci. These leaders created a perfect team to lead the campaign to acquire lands

within the ACNWR. Shortly thereafter, Brevard County, Indian River County, the State of Florida and USFWS joined in the land acquisition effort with significant levels of local, state and federal funding. Lesson learned: Vision, connected leadership and adequate recurring annual funding are the essential cornerstones for a successful conservation land acquisition program.

#### STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS LEVERAGE AND FOCUS ASSETS

I'm sure that everyone involved in ACNWR leadership expected that partnerships among the conservation organizations would be strong. But I think many of us were surprised at the level of support we received from the business community, especially companies directly involved with real estate, appraisal, environmental impact assessments and surveys. We became influential players in the barrier island real estate market. Community recognition that our efforts to acquire lands were based on willing-seller willing-buyer negotiations was a major property rights consideration that helped to gain broad support for conservation land acquisition throughout Florida. I remember the first "all land acquisition partners" meeting in West Palm Beach that was called by the Richard King Mellon Foundation. This meeting represented a historic turning point for the land acquisition teams. The goal: partition the south beaches into discrete land acquisition segments to make sure that land owners and their representatives negotiated exclusively with a single acquisition entity. The strategic acquisition plan was brilliant. Lesson learned: Guiding conservation principles, aligned values and clear strategies help leverage and focus human and financial assets.

#### RECURRING ANNUAL INVESTMENT IS ESSENTIAL

The Richard King Mellon Foundation was the first organization to bring dedicated, recurring land acquisition funding to the ACNWR initiative. The State of Florida was a strong land acquisition partner because of the 10-year Preservation 2000 program. For many years, the ACNWR could count on up to \$10M in P-2000 funds dedicated for land acquisition. Both Brevard County and Indian River County brought significant local funds to the ACNWR initiative with dedicated funding through their voter-approved endangered lands programs. Federal funding was available on an annual basis, however funding levels in the early years lagged behind local, state and RKM commitments. Congressional funding levels varied from year to year. Lesson learned: Adequate recurring annual financial investment is essential to successful conservation and restoration initiatives.

#### COMMUNITY SUPPORT MATTERS

The most important aspect of the ACNWR was the level of public interest, engagement and willing investment in sea turtle and barrier island ecosystem conservation. Community support a quarter century ago was very high. That level of support continues today. Public support was not limited to environmental groups and stakeholders. Support for the ACNWR was diverse, broad-based, well-informed and passionate. That support is linked directly to the ability of people of any age to have a close and safe encounter with a nesting female sea turtle on the beaches of the ACNWR. It's an experience you never forget. For many, it can be life changing. Lesson learned: When people experience nature, they gain knowledge. As they gain knowledge, they begin to appreciate the complexities and beauty of nature. The more they experience nature, the more they assign value to the experience. When people value nature, they will invest to protect it.

Memories from Gerald “Jerry” Heyes  
Founding President of the Friends of the Carr Refuge

### Friends of the Carr Refuge Origins

The Friends of the Carr Refuge was created initially in the early 1990's as a way to utilize a \$10,000 donation from the Disney Corporation. The Archie Carr National Wildlife Refuge, being a federal organization, could not accept the donation, and a non-profit group was needed to legally accept that donation for the Refuge, and allow for a tax deduction for the Disney Corp. The lengthy process to apply to the IRS for 501(c)(3) status could take up to a year or more. At the time, I was president of the Sea Turtle Preservation Society, so we agreed to create a subsidiary of the STPS, which was the Friends of the Carr Refuge, that could then raise and accept funds for the Refuge using the STPS 501(c)(3).. A separate bank account was created for the use of the funds dedicated to Refuge needs. I then became the first President of the Friends Group and continued to serve on the STPS Board of Directors, with the President of the Friends Group having a permanent position on the STPS Board. This situation continued for a number of years until it was realized that the Friends Group needed to establish an independent Board and file for a separate 501(c)(3). At this time I decided that it was time for me to step down and give that job to Brandon Smith, who agreed to take the necessary steps to create a completely separate Friends Group.

### Hurricanes Wreck Havok on Refuge Property

In the late 1990's, the Refuge owned a parcel of land on the east side of A1A, immediately to the south of Driftwood Plaza, which contained two 2 story buildings and an aging sea wall protecting them. These buildings were used as living quarters for the UCF students who do the daily nest count, as well as other sea turtle studies. A hurricane made the building on the eastern most side uninhabitable, and it had to be demolished. The western most building sustained considerable damage to the exterior. The Friends Group hired a contractor and purchased the necessary material to have the building repaired, in order to be ready for the next hurricane season. Unfortunately that year the second building was badly damaged and had to be torn down. To make matters worse, the sea wall collapsed onto the beach and the concrete had to be removed as well. The seawall did give the Refuge the opportunity to remove it and restore the dune with grass plantings.

## The Birth of the Archie Carr National Wildlife Refuge

Paul Tritaik

The Archie Carr National Wildlife Refuge, located within a 20.5-mile stretch of beach on the barrier islands of Brevard and Indian River Counties on the Atlantic coast of Florida, represents the nation's most significant land acquisition effort to protect the nesting populations of sea turtles. The Archie Carr Refuge is perhaps the most significant nesting areas for loggerhead sea turtles in the world, the most significant nesting area for green sea turtles in the United States, and an increasingly important nesting area for leatherback sea turtles.

The idea to establish a national wildlife refuge to protect sea turtles began in the late 1980s as a direct result of the work of Dr. Llewellyn "Doc" Ehrhart, whose data showed that the beaches of south Brevard County were the most productive nesting beaches for loggerhead sea turtles in the Western Hemisphere. "Doc" Ehrhart's work followed cursory investigations and monitoring that was inspired by famed sea turtle expert, Dr. Archie Carr, who had recognized the importance of the south Brevard beaches to sea turtle nesting in the 1970s. The national wildlife refuge proposal was strongly supported by the State of Florida, which began a Conservation And Recreation Lands (CARL) program in 1988 and targeted important coastal habitat in Brevard and Indian River Counties. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) approved a preliminary refuge proposal in 1988 thanks in large part to the convincing arguments made by FWS Endangered Species Biologist, Earl Possardt and the vision of the FWS Southeast Regional Director James Pulliam.

The refuge was authorized by Congress in 1989 and renamed the Archie Carr National Wildlife Refuge in honor of Dr. Archie F. Carr (1909-1987), the world-renowned zoologist, naturalist, and author, who dedicated his life to studying and protecting sea turtles. The proposed refuge garnered the support of U.S. Senators and Congressmen, the Governor of Florida, Boards of County Commissioners, and over 100,000 citizens whose letters of support were so numerous that the Congressional Mailing Room resorted to weighing the letters, thanks to groups like the Ocean Conservancy, Sea Turtle Conservancy, and the Sea Turtle Preservation Society. The Final Environmental Assessment for the Proposed Archie Carr National Wildlife Refuge was approved in August of 1990 with the purpose "to protect sea turtle populations and their nesting habitat along the central Atlantic coastline of Florida. Also in 1990, Congress authorized appropriations for funding land acquisition at Archie Carr NWR for the following year. On June 25, 1991, the first parcel of land (Leiser Tract) was acquired for the Archie Carr National Wildlife Refuge in Indian River County. In January 1993, Paul Tritaik was hired as the first Refuge Manager of the Archie Carr NWR in addition to managing the Pelican Island NWR nearby. Sebastian Inlet State Park provided essential office and storage space for the Archie Carr Refuge in the early days.

The acquisition plan for the Refuge set a goal for purchase of 9.3 miles within four sections of this 20.5-mile stretch of beach in Brevard and Indian River Counties. In addition to sea turtles, the beaches, dunes, coastal scrub, and maritime hammock areas of the barrier island ecosystem within and adjacent to the Archie Carr Refuge provide habitat for many other animals and plants listed as rare, threatened, endangered, or species of special concern by Federal and State agencies. Other federally listed species include the Florida scrub-jay, eastern indigo snake, and southeastern beach mouse. The barrier island beaches also support a great diversity of resident and migratory bird species, including shorebirds, wading birds, and songbirds.

The designation of the Archie Carr National Wildlife Refuge was the beginning of a visionary conservation program made possible by a multi-agency land acquisition and conservation initiative. This multi-agency effort represents an innovative partnership to protect the ecological integrity, biological diversity, and functional ecosystem linkages of the barrier island. To accomplish this, the State's CARL program, along with Brevard County's Environmentally Endangered Lands (EEL) Program Indian River County's Conservation Lands Program expanded the proposed protected areas of the Archie Carr Refuge to include the last remaining high quality natural areas of the barrier island ecosystem to protect some of the most endangered natural upland communities in Florida and to protect the sea turtle nesting beaches from artificial lighting encroachments and other human impacts. In addition, these conservation lands provide a hedge against sea level rise and coastal erosion.

This unique partnership that has emerged to support the Refuge represents a model for cooperation and communication among government agencies and the local community. Partners in the land acquisition effort have included the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Brevard County, Indian River County, the Richard King Mellon Foundation, The Conservation Fund, and The Nature Conservancy. Coordination efforts were enhanced by the formation of the Archie Carr Working Group in 1994, with representatives from governmental agencies, research and conservation organizations, as well as the local community. The Archie Carr Working Group has been meeting several times a year ever since and has provided a forum for discussion of issues important to the Archie Carr Refuge, particularly with regards to research, land management, land acquisition, and education and outreach. The Friends of the Carr Refuge was formed soon after and worked with partners to fund refuge projects and provide outreach through the Carr Companion. The Brevard EEL Program later acquired and renovated an old restaurant to create the Barrier Island Ecosystem Center and worked with the Sea Turtle Conservancy to provide educational opportunities to the public as well as host popular sea turtle watch programs.

The Archie Carr National Wildlife Refuge was conceived and created through the dedicated partnerships that exist today, which have enabled the Archie Carr Refuge to fulfill its mission to protect sea turtle populations and their nesting habitat, despite funding and staffing challenges that confront national wildlife refuges nationally. Thanks to the vision of the early Archie Carr Refuge proponents, along with the exceptional contributions of members of the Archie Carr Working Group and the tremendous dedication of the University of Central Florida's Marine Turtle Research Group, the Archie Carr National Wildlife Refuge has been and will continue to be a resounding success.

## **From A Dream To Reality**

My recollections of the early years of the Archie Carr NWR

Dorn Whitmore, former Chief Ranger Merritt Island NWR

A refuge to protect the most significant sea turtle nesting site in America began as a dream formed out the research of Dr. Ehrhart. It seemed impossible because it depended upon the acquisition of a significant stretch of the most valuable real estate in the nation. It was just a dream, it could not happen, but like a pearl, slowly layer after layer of support coalesced and this dream eventually gained support and became a reality. Because of many of the people gathered here this evening, this dream became a reality.

In retrospect, the 1990's were a good era for land conservation in Florida. A new wave of growth and development was washing over Florida and there was an increased sense of urgency to conserve some of what was left. The U S Fish and Wildlife Service was in the midst of this movement and Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge was integral because of its geographic location. At that time, the refuge managed three National Wildlife Refuges in Central Florida (Merritt Island, St. Johns and Pelican Island).

Pelican Island was suffering the same fate as much of Florida when the eastern refuge border began converting from citrus groves into high end residential development. This land conversion and associated boat docks threatened the integrity of our Nation's first NWR. A plan was put together to expand the refuge and buy a buffer around the refuge. About the same time, Earl Possardt with the USFWS Ecological Service Office developed a plan to protect 25 miles of sea turtle nesting beach in Brevard and Indian River Counties. MINWR was charged with administering both projects.

Land Acquisition and public support were vital components of both plans and the refuge launched into a series of public meetings to garner local support. At Pelican Island, led by local developers, anti- conservation forces and a general distrust of the federal government, there was strong oppositions to the refuge expansion. A series of meetings met with open hostility. Without public support there was little hope for Congressional funding. The Refuge realized we needed to bring together in one room the voices from both sides and begin a dialog between them to move the project forward. Over time this strategy eventually worked.

The exact opposite occurred for the land acquisition for the proposed Archie Carr NWR. With the resistance met in Indian River Count fresh in our minds and with some trepidation, the refuge began holding public meetings for the proposed Archie Carr NWR. To our surprise, the proposal for the creation of the ACNWR meet with little opposition. The residence living on the barrier island welcomed the land acquisition when they realized it would not threaten their lifestyle. Instead, the proposal protected what they cherished most - the amenities of a natural beach and maintaining lower residential densities. In short, the creation of the ACNWR helped preserve the status quo. The dichotomy between the levels of support between the two neighboring projects was astonishing.

In the early 1990's there was limited funds for land acquisition in the Fish and Wildlife Service and in order to be successful your project had to compete nation-wide with all the other projects in the National Wildlife Refuge System. It was a very competitive process and public support was vital. With the uncertainty of federal funding, the refuge realized outside support was necessary. The refuge began a dialog with local and state governments, and private non-profit groups for support and

fortunately all the planets began to align. The State of Florida had the nation's largest land acquisitions program at that time. They endorsed the project in a major way eventually contributing a majority of the funding. Also, both Brevard and Indian River Counties had passed bond referendums for land conservation and they too joined the effort. To coordinate efforts between the various groups the Refuge initiated talks between the partnering groups to begin the Archie Carr Working Group. The working group helped facilitate a dialog to navigate through the pitfalls of coordinating land acquisition and management. In the early years the Archie Carr Working Group was a model of cooperation and was essential to eventual success of the refuge.

During the early days of the acquisition, the Refuge also made a presentation to the Richard King Mellon foundation, a non-profit organization which partnered through the Nature Conservancy to help fund land acquisition nationwide. I must admit, with the uncertainty surrounding funding the Pelican Island project, the Service was pushing the Mellon Foundation to help fund it. However, we put together a presentation for both Pelican Island and the Archie Carr and fortunate for the Archie Carr NWR the Mellon Foundation choose to support it. Over time the Mellon Foundation contributed the astonishing amount of over \$25 million, almost one quarter of the needed funding.

Another vital organization in the early life of the Refuge was the Carr Foundation. I distinctly remember during the uncertainty of federal funding, the refuge put out word through the working group urging members to send letters to Congress to support the project. The Carr Foundation knew exactly what to do and through their national support network they rallied members to write letters to Congress. The efforts of the Carr Foundation produced 25 lbs. of mail in support of the refuge. Can you image what 25 lbs. of mail looked like on the desk of the Appropriation Committee members! Consequently funding was approved. Eventually, through the proding of the Carr Foundation and others, the Federal government contributed in excess of \$3 million in funding.

From the beginning this dream of a sea turtle refuge in central Florida was made possible through the efforts of many individuals and organizations. Today we celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Archie Carr NWR but this dream could not have become a reality without the significant efforts of the people gathered in this room. We celebrate this milestone and your contribution to it.

Continue to Dream.