

FROM PASTURE TO EDEN

By Chick Vienneau

The making of Skyland Estates is by no means an exciting narrative, because cattle and sheep had been grazing on that little mountain for over a hundred years, and, today, there is no indication that Mitchell Field, for that was the former name of what is now known as Skyland Estates, had ever been a pasture.

There was a man named Hubert J. Burrows who used to fly over Mitchell Field, and he liked what he saw. So he bought the field, named it Skyland, and began to develop it into a resort quite removed from the noisy hustle and bustle of city living.

With the loyal assistance of mutually dedicated persons, Mr. Burrows worked diligently for ten long years in an attempt to fulfill a dream. A paragraph taken from a letter sent by Mr. Burrows to Sir Simon Kriger reveals the scope and the sincerity of Mr. Burrows' goal: "I have conducted this development with honesty, a very high degree of integrity, and, as such, it enjoys a most enviable reputation for sincerity and stability of purpose. There is no other development in all of Northern Virginia that outclasses same."

At the beginning of the development, Mr. Burrows expressed his intentions of providing a number of services to potential homesteaders, and a promotional sign erected at Linden enumerated them; but it seems that he defaulted on some of his promises for reasons best known to himself. Despite what took place in those days, I feel that, today, we owe tribute to Mr. Burrows for having started the development of Skyland Estates. To me he was a courageous pioneer, for it took "guts" to buy up a piece of almost barren land and attempt to turn it into a viable community.

I learned that Mr. Burrows had been an expert pilot, that he had given lessons to the late Arthur Godfrey, that he had owned two planes which he would alternately land atop the mountain along Bifrost Way, the runway starting near the library and ending near Thelma Abbott's property, and, further, that he had distinguished himself as an astute aerial photographer. Many of the founding inhabitants own pictures of the early development of Skyland Estates which came from the lens of Mr. Burrows' aerial camera.