

# A History of the Normandy Apartments



*Dear Normandy Neighbors,*

*So many of you have expressed an interest in the history of our Normandy home that we did some investigating and wanted to share what we've learned with you*

*Well-known Rocky River developer Neville A. Chandler constructed both Building A and Building B in 1967 and 1972, respectively. Since that first groundbreaking, ownership of the properties*

## THE CHANDLER YEARS

The first owner and operator, Neville Chandler was a highly regarded Rocky River resident and developer who recognized that many of his neighbors and friends who were retiring wanted to continue to live in familiar surroundings. He promoted his offering, saying:

***“The romantic charms of the French countryside have been captured in the distinctive landscaping and architectural design of The Normandy” and “You’ll love life at The Normandy--the enchanting new retirement community that combines gracious living with security.”***

When Neville’s son John Chandler was asked why his father named his development “The Normandy”

and modeled the design on French architecture, he recounted this story about his father:

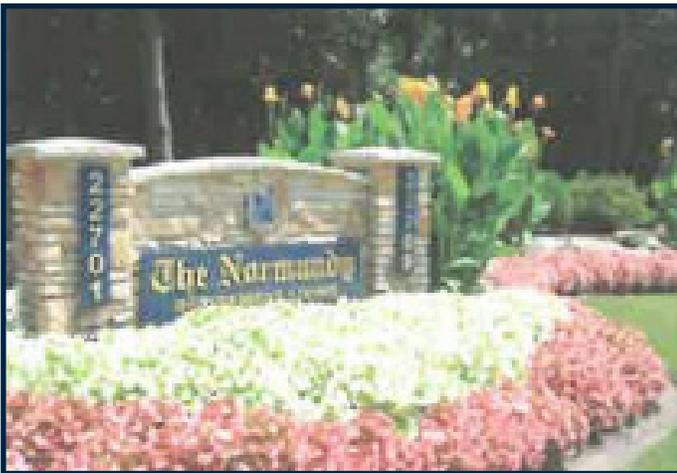
Neville served in WW II as an Army intelligence officer in North Africa, Sicily, and France. He arrived in France with the invasion at Normandy. Only a few members of his company survived this assault, and after regrouping, their command had to decide on a course of action. This required knowing the whereabouts of the German forces, so Neville and two others were sent forward by jeep to locate the Germans.

*They hadn’t gone far when they were captured by a truckload of German troops and escorted to their*

*encampment. Once there, Neville observed the damage that the invasion had inflicted on the Germans. The dead were unburied, the wounded unattended, equipment and supplies in ruins. When faced with three German officers, the Americans were declared prisoners of war. In response to this, Neville advised the Germans that his American command was poised to attack, but if the Germans would surrender to him they would be treated as prisoners and provided with medical care and food and evacuated to safety. After consultation, the three German officers are shown in a polaroid shot, which Neville brought home, raising their hands in surrender. Mr. Chandler returned to France many times during his lifetime. He admired French architecture and style and it influenced many of his professional designs.*

Residents began to arrive in Building A in September of 1969 and in Building B in May of 1972. From an article that appeared in the Cleveland Press real estate section on November 9, 1973 we learn:

**“Administrator Dudley Wood said The Normandy plan has worked so well that only 12 of the 161 suites still are available. Furthermore on another section of his 21-acre parcel, Chandler plans to build twin 10-story buildings which will include a restaurant, shops and extended care facilities.”**



The Normandy, an Ohio Limited Partnership offered a “Lifetime Residency Plan” for persons 65 years of age and older. Phyllis Hothem, a current resident of The Normandy, and her mother, moved here in 1974 and she graciously provided us with copies of the original legal documents which were executed by the residents during Chandler’s ownership.

The Normandy opened in 1969. Suites ranged in size from 600 to 1,700 square feet each and included efficiency, one-bedroom and two-bedroom two-bath units with 10-year rents ranging from \$18,900 to \$35,800.

The services furnished included all utilities except phone, plus one indoor garage space. For those without transportation, a courtesy car left at 10 a.m. daily to go any place in River. If they wanted to go somewhere in River at a different hour, they could use the local cab and be reimbursed by The Normandy. Leases could be terminated by the landlord if the tenant was deemed to be in either poor physical or mental health.

To explain the deal, let’s assume that a 65-year old couple named Smith liked the plan and chose a large two-bedroom, two-bath suite. Their lease agreement would be for two years with an option to renew for four additional two-year terms. The Smiths would be obligated to pay rent to The Normandy of \$3,580 the first of each year for 10 years totaling \$35,800. In addition, there would be a maintenance fee of \$142 per month in 1974. This fee could be adjusted annually but would never increase more than 5% (\$7.10) per month in any future year.

After 10 years, when they were 75, the Smiths would have the right to occupy their suite for as long as they lived by paying only the monthly maintenance fee. If the Smiths could not continue to occupy their suite for all five of the 10-year terms, they would pay only for the terms they occupied. For example, if they stayed into the second two-year lease, they would pay  $4 \times \$3,580 = \$14,320$  or 40% of the \$35,800, and not be obligated to pay the balance. Two additional legal documents were required to fix the deal.

First, a loan agreement was executed between The Normandy, hereinafter called the “borrower” and the Smiths, hereinafter called the “lender,” and it stated: “The lender agrees to loan to the borrower \$35,800.” The second document, a promissory note, stated “The Normandy hereinafter called the borrower, agrees to pay the Smiths, hereinafter called the lender \$35,800.” This arrangement was used to facilitate financing of the construction.

## THE NORCOR YEARS

On July 23, 1978 the Limited Partners, namely Frank Awender, Jack Buford, Nev Chandler, Robert Conroy, Jack Havinghurst and Dick Whitney sold The Normandy for \$6,041,968 to NORCOR Ltd., whose president was Frank Celeste, former mayor of Lakewood, Ohio and father of then-Ohio Governor Richard Celeste. In September 1978 NORCOR, doing business as Normandy Associates Limited Partnership, filed a Declaration of Condominium Ownership.

The purchase was partially financed with an 8.5% variable rate mortgage from First Federal Savings and Loan Bank of Lakewood.

From 1978 thru 1981 NORCOR marketed The Normandy with an ad saying: "Give The Normandy's 169 neighborly people a chance to call you by your first name." Inside the brochure are pictures of 14 residents with their endorsements of Normandy living and this offer:

**"Not a condominium. Not a rental apartment. Not a lump sum never-to-be-seen-again payment plan. It's The Normandy's New Lease on Life!"**

For those 60 or better they offered a one-bedroom suite priced at \$54,500, compared to the 1974 price of \$23,500. The up-front price for a two-bedroom suite increased from \$35,800 to \$85,000. If you should leave The Normandy in the first year you or your estate receives a repayment of 90% of your investment. In the second year 80%, third year 70%, fourth year or anytime thereafter, 60% would be refunded. The monthly maintenance fee was \$185 for an individual and \$205 for a couple and was described as half that of a comparable apartment elsewhere. There was no cap on the maintenance fee.

If the tenant terminated the agreement, the monthly maintenance fee was still payable until a new tenant was secured. The refund of the initial payment was paid within 90 days of securing a new resident. If the tenant was unable to maintain himself independently, the lease could be terminated. Twenty-one such leases were entered into between 1978 and 1981, and the Elyria Methodist Home was the operator for part of 1980.

During the years of Mr. Celeste's ownership, from 1978 thru 1985, multiple problems confronted him. The residents with the original Chandler leases were living much longer than predicted and their maintenance fees were paying less than the cost of operation. Interest rates on the original mortgage had increased from 8.5% to 18%, and The Normandy was legally prevented from becoming a condominium. In 1981, NORCOR lost \$296,164 with similar losses during each of the following three years. All efforts to attract new tenants ended in 1982. Efforts to reduce expenses resulted in carpeting and furnishings being worn out, major appliances, plumbing and light fixtures being removed from the vacant suites to replace worn out equipment in occupied suites and mortgage payments becoming delinquent. On September 1, 1982, First Federal Savings and Loan of Lakewood foreclosed on NORCOR Inc. Facing foreclosure and having lost more than one million dollars over the previous four years, NORCOR declared bankruptcy and First Federal Savings of Lakewood bought The Normandy at a sheriff's sale in October of 1985 thus becoming the third owner.

During the NORCOR years more than half of The Normandy apartments were occupied by residents with the original Chandler leases. They had paid their rent in full and were current in their monthly maintenance fees. Despite Mr. Celeste's best efforts, he was unable to force them to pay more or to evict them. Needless to say, these residents were not happy campers. All but the most basic services and maintenance had been discontinued and living conditions were deteriorating. An attempt to raise

rents on tenants with NORCOR leases resulted in twenty people moving out to other apartments in the area. The Normandy Tenants Association, headed by president Betty Sprague, represented them in their dealings with the current owners and later with prospective buyers.

The residents became a close knit family, and to make up for the lack of staff they voluntarily cared for the buildings and grounds and for each other.

## THE FIRST FEDERAL SAVINGS OF LAKEWOOD YEAR

First Federal took possession of The Normandy in October 1985 and named Mr. Larry Faulhaber manager. In February of 1986 the property was offered for sale. Two prospective buyers thoroughly investigated the situation. One was a partnership comprised of King James Group of Westlake, Kopf Builders of Avon Lake and St. John West Shore

Hospital; and the other was the Orlean Co. of Shaker Heights. Each conducted in-depth interviews and held meetings with existing tenants in order to create a business plan that would honor the leases of the 98 occupied apartments. First Federal sold The Normandy property to the Orlean Co. on October 27, 1986.

## THE ORLEAN YEAR

The Orlean Company developed and owned more than 4,000 apartment suites throughout Ohio, Pennsylvania, Michigan and Washington, D.C. Jane Koby was employed in property management by Orlean for almost 30 years. From the beginning of the Orleans' involvement with The Normandy, she evaluated the previous operation and championed the residents' needs to the company. Jane became a resident of The Normandy, and in 1999 she left full time property management and became administrator and marketing director for The Normandy. She graciously made available to us the detailed records which she has kept since the beginning of David and Arthur Orlean's interest in The Normandy. A Westlife news article in June, 2002 quotes Jane, saying:

**"I love working with well-educated, senior people here who offer such a variety of life experiences and are so willing to share their knowledge and background. They have value and I respect that**

**they are one of our greatest sources of wisdom, we build our present by looking back at our history." Koby, the eldest of six children, raised five of her own children and is proud to be a minister's daughter who inspired his children by his own kind acts.**

In August and September of 1986, before buying The Normandy, the prospective owners met with the residents and presented their plan to bring about an "Ideal Community" if the residents would work with them. They invited the Celeste tenants, who had moved elsewhere, to return and 17 did so. On September 2, they offered residents a "service package" at an introductory cost of \$375 per month for singles or \$500 per month for couples if they signed the deal by September 12. This would be in addition to the \$230 per month maintenance fee they were paying on the 98 occupied apartments. The "service package" would restore the paid staff and amenities which had been eliminated during the NORCOR years. This offer in no way affected their rights to rent free use of their

apartments as long as they lived. Enough of the original tenants agreed to purchase the service package that, with this income plus the prospect of renting 51 vacant suites to new tenants at \$772 per month, the Orlean Company decided to proceed with the purchase. Their five-year financial projections show that the company anticipated losses for the first four years and a small excess of income over expense in the fifth year.

The concept of selling life-long living was abandoned and The Normandy was marketed to those 60 and older who desired a more luxurious full-service, full-amenity community. About \$1.25 million was spent by the end of 1987 on reconstruction, renovation and new developments. Hallways were re-carpeted and wallpapered. Driveways and parking lots were repaved. New landscaping was completed, an exercise room was equipped and a coffee shop opened in the Building A club room. Next, a nursing home was planned for the 32-acre property. In 1991 a reception and ribbon-cutting ceremony celebrated the opening of the 150-bed skilled nursing facility which is known today as The Manor.

Buildings A and B were still separated by the main entrance driveways which served the separate entrances to each building and access to the rear parking lot. The residents in B resisted going outdoors to get to the coffee shop in A, and likewise, A didn't come to cocktails in the B club room. To overcome the rivalry between the two buildings they had to be connected. Doing so, while maintaining the driveways to the rear parking lot and the Manor, led to considering a skywalk or a tunnel. Further study revealed that there was adequate footage on the west side of A Building to construct a new driveway to the rear areas and, if easements from the city could be obtained, a service drive could be constructed to the east from Lake Road to the rear. Plans were submitted to the city. Many meetings were held at city hall, which included representatives from the city, The Normandy and the neighboring property owners before the required city approval was granted.

In 1994 the new driveways were built and Building A was connected to Building B with the construction of the atrium. This connector brought the residents of A and B buildings together in a lunch room, main entrance foyer, dining room, fireside room, library and

game room. The stained glass windows in the atrium were designed and crafted by Norm Wiebusch. When he and his wife Marge retired and sold their house in Bay Village, they wanted a retirement home where he would be able to continue working on his favorite hobby. The Normandy Hobby Shop suited his needs and he worked there until his death in 2007. In June 2002, The Normandy held a cocktail party to honor him with a plaque and formally dedicated the stained glass creations which we admire in The Normandy today.

During the 25 years that the Orlean Company has owned The Normandy, they have developed it into a unique premier retirement community. Residents are free to stay or leave and to use just the services they choose because there is no requirement for a major up-front payment with a lifetime commitment. The first year lease is secured by a one-month rent deposit and thereafter it is renewable on a month-to-month basis. Rent includes a full slate of social, cultural and recreational options conducted by a caring staff. Fine dining and concierge services are available on an a la carte basis and will meet any and all of one's developing personal needs without relocating.

Apartment maintenance and repair services are handled promptly by the in-house staff. Attractive special rooms are dedicated to group activities, library, exercise, beauty shop, cocktail lounge, gaming and hobbies. The spacious wooded grounds provide walking paths, a putting green and individual plots for flower or vegetable gardens. The buildings and grounds have been regularly improved and beautifully maintained. Recently the carpeting, furniture and decor of the Atrium has been renewed and the original exterior windows and doors were replaced with the latest in thermals.

Finally, and perhaps best of all, a tradition has evolved that finds residents who are extremely considerate of each other's privacy, but at the same time fully engage with each other in exercise classes, discussion groups, birthday parties, bus trips for shopping, restaurants, theaters and concerts. Here is a rich social life to please all, be it bridge or a tailgate party.



A Building Ground Breaking, 1968  
 L-R Earl Martin, Rocky River Service Director  
 Norman Schwenk, Mayor of Rocky River  
 Jack Ruppert, Pres. Broadview S&L



Neville Chandler, on the right, accepting  
 German surrender



B Building Ground Breaking, 1968  
 L-R Jack Ruppert, Prex. Broadview S&L  
 Earl Martin, Mayor of Rocky River  
 Neville Chandler, Developer



B Building before the Atrium was built.  
 Driveway to A in the foreground and  
 driveway to B in the background.



The ruins of the German Army



**BREAKWATER**  
 APARTMENTS

**LAKESIDE**  
 ASSISTED LIVING

**CARE CENTER**  
 SKILLED/REHABILITATION