

## Burt, Al *THE MARSHALL PLAN* "Al Burt's Florida"

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To reach Fort Marshall, you must leave the asphalt and the concrete and take dirt roads that wind through scrub country. If you can beat the ruts, and can read signs like an Indian, finally you turn into a North central Florida family compound where some real Floridians live, the Marshalls.

Some of their family ancestors have been bumping around Florida since about 1835, a time when the Seminole Indians fought with knives and guns, not bingo cards.

In recent years, the family has tended to gather more often at their woodsy retreat in Putman County where some of them have staked out retirement plans.

Arthur R. Marshall, a publicly fierce sort of a fellow who privately enjoys such benign entertainment as taking wife Kay out to pick blueberries, is the family leader. Not only his two sons but all of the Marshalls, whether sister or brother or niece or nephew, look upon Art with pride.

He is a man who spent a half-century developing a special vision of Florida, with an emphasis on South Florida, and he sees it differently than you and I might. He views it the way a fine doctor examines a beloved, troubled child -- in terms of both disciplined science and attentive love.

Marshall looks at Florida's life-sustaining swamps and rivers and lakes, catching and hooding the water supply, and sees the environment equivalent of a human blood system.

He looks at the people that make the cities hum and flow, and at the wildlife that graces the forests and the delicate scrub country, and he sees the equivalent of a nervous system.

He sees a lot more. His mind constructs intuitions into theories about how and why all works, or does not work. He suggests remedies that are not quite like what anybody else suggests.

In his classic book on the environment, *A Sand County Almanac*, written in 1949, Aldo Leopold offered generalized opinions that described a little bit of what life is like for Art Marshall. "One lives alone in a world of wounds," Leopold wrote. "Much of the damage inflicted on land is quite invisible to laymen. An ecologist must either harden his shell and make believe...or he must be the doctor who sees the marks of death in a community that believes itself well"...

Marshall is a theoretical ecologist, one not only trained in the sciences but also experienced in the field, who uses his intuition to couple the two and to elaborate probable explanations of what had seemed unexplainable.

His dogged pursuit of a trail-blazing role has lighted the path for some scientists, but has infuriated some others, for the proofs and the mathematical formulas for his ideas have not yet been devised.

What scientist Albert Einstein said about theoretical physicist Max Planck, whose Quantum Theory revolutionized physics and won the 1918 Nobel Prize, also applies to Marshall.

Said Einstein: "The state of mind which enables a man to do work of this kind is akin to that of the religious worshipper or the lover; the daily effort comes from no deliberate intention or programme, but straight from the heart."

Marshall, 65 last March, has been involved in virtually every significant environmental struggle in South Florida, where he lived for 49 years. His work has spanned the awakening of environmentalism in Florida -- from dredging and filling issues in the 1950s to the repair of the Everglades today.

Although his theories have been many, probably two have dominated his work -- the principle of moderation in growth, and a consuming dedication to the belief that the healthy flow of water through the Everglades is the key to South Florida's well-being.

"Growth should be stopped rather than managed or controlled", he once said, "In the same way a lake can have too much nutrients in it, like Lake Apopka, and a farm can have too much fertilizer on it, a city can have too many people in it.. Above that point, it's catastrophic in terms of ability of citizens to pay taxes and ability of government to deliver services..."

He prefaces any Everglades discussion with an explanation of what it used to be. "The pristine Everglades was a unique river system," he said. "Its flow of water began in the Chain of Lakes of the upper Kissimmee River Valley....In rainy season those lakes rose...spilling their waters south into Lake Kissimmee and through it onto the floodplain of the lower Kissimmee Valley and then into Lake Okeechobee. When Okeechobee rose...it spilled water south into the great floodplain of the sawgrass Everglades..."

Marshall argued that a naturally meandering Kissimmee River and sheet of shallow flow of water across the Everglades gave South Florida additional reservoirs of water. He said that when the Kissimmee was channelized into a straight ditch, and the sheet flow was interrupted both by that and by levees in the Everglades, those extra reservoirs in effect were lost and there was a chain reaction. Most easily noticeable was that during periodic droughts, Lake Okeechobee no longer was an adequate water reservoir for South Florida.

He, and others, for years have wanted the Everglades restored. They advocated that the way to begin was by de-channelizing the river, reversing the \$40 million ditch job done 20 years ago.

When Gov. Bob Graham moved this year to test that de-channelizing theory on a 12-mile strip of the river, Marshall was elated. "No one really knew if Einstein was correct in his theory (of relativity) -- not even he was absolutely certain of its validity -- until that bomb went off at Alamogordo," he wrote me. "My bomb is the Kissimmee ditch restored!"

Not long after that, the doctors told Art Marshall that he was seriously ill. The news came at a time when there seemed to be so much that needed to be done, so many theories to be proven.

But he seemed to take it philosophically, as only men of accomplishments and character can. He felt tired, he said recently, but he made it easy on his friends. He treated it like the weariness of a man who has come home after a satisfying day on the job.

His work is on the table now. It will be in the history books. Nobody seriously interested in the natural health of Florida ever will forget it.