

Paul Frank: The Wilderness Man

BY MIKE MONGOVEN, CGCS

A short visit to the Wilderness Country Club is all it takes to discover what Paul Frank values. An adjective to describe this most important factor would be "wilderness."

He lived the New York State Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program long before there was such a thing. Starting in Paul's office and continuing across the property of Wilderness Country Club, are many examples of naturally-occurring beauty. These range from deer, alli-

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gators, turkeys, rattlesnakes, eagles, bobcats, woodpeckers and chuckaluske chickens. When a person is in this environment, it is hard to imagine that some people actually believe that golf courses are a detriment to the environment.

Paul has lived his entire life on the property that is now the Wilderness Country Club. When he was born in Naples in 1934, it was a booming metropolis of 768 people, and that was all of Collier County. Mosquito control in those days consisted of holes dug in the swampy woods so that they would retain water through the entire dry season. The minnows that survived would then take care of the mosquito larva.

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bers were. "Everyone was always ready to help," he said. "Our code of ethics was one that we all truly cared about and we had respect for one another."

Paul cites two things as his greatest accomplishments. First is his pride in building a beautiful golf course where others can really enjoy nature. Second is his discovery and propagation of PF-11, an off-type bermudagrass he found in one of his Tifgreen putting surfaces. The

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grass has many positive attributes.

His greatest concern about the golf business is the trend of golf course superintendents to get hero complexes. "Guys are too often motivated to put their jobs in jeopardy by trying to satisfy a small percentage of their membership," Frank said. "This process often damages the health of the turf, as well as the job security of the golf course superintendent."

Friends and colleagues praise Frank for his commitment and professionalism. As Clint Smallridge, CGCS, sums up, "Paul is just a terrific guy. He shoots from the hip and talks from the heart."

Paul Frank is a living example of what is good about the golf course business. He has set a high standard we should all strive to emulate.