Get me out of here - this place is full

Joe Konwinski 1915-2002

at his funeral was testament to the
didn't like, and the overflowing crowd
for many years has embraced him as
activist, only upon his passing do we
learn the depth, range, and diversity of
Joe's service to others.

Joe volunteered his time
to the Special Olympics, the Boy
Scouts, the Girl Scouts, the Salvation
Army, and the American Heart
Association. He served on the Palm
Beach Community College
 Beautification Committee, the John F.
Kennedy Hospital Development
Council, and the Lake Worth High
School Advisory Board. He was club
member of the Rotary Club of Lake
Worth for 43 years, on the board of
the Palm Beach Habilitation Center
for 31 years, master of ceremonies for
the Lake Worth Chamber of
Commerce monthly breakfast meet-
ings for 20 years, and founder of the
American-Polish Club of Lake Worth,
serving as its president for 17 years.

Joe entered the turf world
in 1946 after leaving the U.S Army
Air Corps, where he served four years
as a glider pilot throughout World War
II at 21 different bases. He was the
superintendent of the Lake Worth
Municipal Golf Course from 1946 to
1958, worked for Owsley sod Co.
from 1962 to 1974, and consulted at
more than 100 golf courses, resorts,
and sports fields throughout his
career. He taught a turfgrass manage-
ment course at Palm Beach
Community College for more than 20
years. He officiated at numerous
industry functions as a speaker, an
emcee, and an installer of officers. He
was friend and mentor to many young
turf neophytes who have gone on to
become successful golf course super-
intendent and sports field managers.

It was hoped by all of us who knew
and loved him that he would be the
special honoree at the FTGA's 50th
anniversary celebration in September.

We all remember Joe's
infectious grin, positive attitude, and
eternal optimism; his one-liners,
funny stories, and ability to get a hug
from every woman in the room. We
all have our special stories and memo-
ries of this beloved gentleman. I will
always remember the years I helped
Joe with his booth promoting the turf-
grass industry at Lake Worth High
School's annual Career Day. We
always had a large baking pan on
which I placed a slab of putting green
turf and a miniature soccer goal that
Joe felt grabbed the kids' attention
and drew them to our booth. He also
liked placing pie tins of various col-
ored fertilizers (like the blue
Nitroform) to gain notice, and got
such a kick out of telling the kids to
bend over and smell this very fragrant
material called Milorganite. We both
were amazed at the number of stu-
dents who knew ammonium nitrate
could be used to make bombs, but had
no clue it was a plant fertilizer.

Joe leaves behind four
generations of relatives, including a
brother, daughter-in-law, and numer-
ous grieving nieces, nephews, grand-
children, and great grandchildren. His
beloved wife Lucy, 1994, and son
Joey, 1977, preceded him in death.
His service was Aug. 27 at E. Earl
Smith & Son Funeral Home in Lake
Worth, and he was interred at
Pinecrest Cemetery. Numerous and
various means of honoring his memo-
ry have been suggested and are in the
works.

On the last page of Joe's
memorial folder was a poem so apro-
pos of this remarkable man and the
life he led:

Goodbye Is Not Forever
When you lived your life for others
and you loved without condition
When you made so many laugh
and your smile won't be forgotten
When you left behind an empty place
that no one else can fill
When the friendships that you shared
long to be renewed
When you built your life on hope
and fulfilled it every day
The footprints that you left behind
will bring us face to face
So, goodbye is not forever,
you're only steps away

Joe Konwinski 1915-2002

The Will Rogers of Turfgrass

by Mark Jarrell

Joe Konwinski, one of the
Florida Turfgrass Association's found-
ing fathers and its first president in
1952, passed away Aug. 17. He was
87 years young. This master of one-
liners quipped to one of the last
friends to visit him at the hospital,
"Get me out of here - this place is full
of old people!"

Joe never met anyone he
didn't like, and the overflowing crowd
at his funeral was testament to the
inestimable number of people who
were touched by this perpetually smil-
ing, gracious, and witty human
in a lot of cases, now on to the heart of
the matter: Why should you get
board and join your local chapter's
board of directors.

For me, it took 16 years
of slopping at the trough until the
guilt became so intense that I realized
the time had come for me to give
something back for all those years
of meeting, eating, and playing golf.

I will never forget my
first board meeting. It was at Sunrise
Country Club where Machine Gun Al
Ross hung his hat. From that first
meeting I have never been sorry for
stepping up and getting on the train.
People like Bill McKee and Dale
Kuehner made me feel at home and I
was comforted in the fact that they
were glad to have me involved.

There they were some of
the movers and shakers of our chap-
ter, and all nice guys when you got to
know them. In the beginning, the part
of the meeting I enjoyed most was
after, when everyone would go to
dinner and shoot the bull about work.
I learned so much at those dinners,
whether sitting and listening or ask-