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when unavoidable words and clues were spoken. I could see her face in a reflection on the mirrored wall and watched her slowly realize in amazement that it was she he was talking about.

She accepted the award graciously as those who know her would expect and thanked the board and the past presidents and recounted how these were “all my boys” through the years. Marie’s first reaction after receiving the Lifetime Achievement Award was to wonder, how did they find out where I got all those plaques for them? Several of the past presidents gave short anecdotes about how Marie was their right hand when they had the gavel and how she kept the FGCSA moving forward by taking care of the administrative details while we did all the talking.

It all began in 1984 when FGCSA President Tom Burrows called on his neighbor, Marie, two doors down in the North River Shores neighborhood in Stuart and asked if she would do him a favor and type a letter needed for his association. He knew she had a background as an administrative assistant and likely could type. Well, one letter led to

another and then there were some board meeting minutes to be done, and when the FGCSA decided they needed to do a newsletter and a membership directory, somebody said, “Who the heck is going to do all this?” Tom suggested the FGCSA hire Marie permanently. The motion passed and the rest is history.

While she has watched “her boys” and their families grow up, she has a brood of her own who have staked their claim in the medical field and have given her grandchildren to boot. Her oldest daughter Colleen Patterson, a registered nurse, is currently being a full time mom to her three kids: Shannon (15), Taylor (12) and Michael (4). They live just a little way down the street. Marie’s son Mark is a pediatric respiratory therapist and recently moved back to Stuart from Colorado. Mark is a master wake boarder and mountain bike aficionado. Her youngest daughter, Suzanne Turner, lives in Ft. Myers with her hubby and two kids Jackson (6) and Hayden (5 months). Suzanne is a clinical pharmacist.

But Marie has an even larger family that she tries to keep tabs on and with over 1,100 members mem-

bership renewal and directory time get pretty hectic. She really appreciates those volunteers at the chapters who take the time to get information and reports to her on time and she knows it can be tough when you have a full-time job as a golf course superintendent. But when the deadlines to IRS and the State of Florida and GCSAA come due, they’re due. It’s not nice to stall the IRS.

“This is a great job,” Marie said. “I could never have imagined the scope and changes that have occurred over 21 years. Meeting the people and traveling to conference and show and now GCSAA chapter executives meetings and comparing notes with my peers who do similar work from New York to California. It’s been a great experience. It’s not an 8 to 5 type of job, although I have to admit during those first five years, I would get phone calls from superintendents who just naturally assumed that since they were in their offices at 5:00 am so was I. Thankfully, they got over that. My days can be flexible and that’s a nice aspect to this job. I can play tennis with my girl friends in the morning and then work the rest of the day as needed. It really has been a

fun job.”

Marie observed how association life has changed across the state and nation. She said, “I am amazed at the chapters locally and nationally that still expect or think a full-time superintendent will be willing to do his full time job all day and then come home and conduct chapter business into the night, or that he or she even has the time. While a lot of chapters have wives of superintendents acting as administrative assistants or even executive directors, some chapters have hired professional association executives to help the various boards of directors to achieve their goals. One of these days Joel and I will be retiring, I wonder what route the FGCSA will take.”

I can tell you as a former president of the FGCSA and now as a staff member of the association, there is no way we would be where we are without the continuity, experience, dedication and determination that Marie has put into her job over the past two decades. All of us owe her a debt of thanks, and we tried to pay that debt by establishing the Marie Roberts Lifetime Achievement Award in her honor. Thank you, Marie.

# The Little Expo That Thought It Could

By Jim Walker

It was Wednesday, March 23 in the afternoon. All the hard work was done. The tents were up for lunch and the booth displays. Other tents were in place for the equipment distributors and Dr. John Cisar and his staff were all set for the big day on Thursday. Only problem is they forgot to tell Mother Nature. A thunderstorm driven by a cold front came roaring through the Fort Lauderdale Research Center and wreaked havoc on the whole shebang.

This is the same front that almost kept the Players Championship in Jacksonville from taking place. When Susi and I arrived at the center at 7 a.m. Thursday, South Florida President Kelly Cragin told us about the small tornado which had come through the previous afternoon. He and a small army of people from the South Florida chapter went to work trying to reassemble the display area.

The vendor who supplied the tents had a crew on site by 8 a.m. and they began to try to set the tents

back up. As I walked from the registration tables up front where 500 people were being processed to the research green in the back, I recalled the children’s story about the little engine trying to pull a train up a steep hill. “I think I can, I think I can.” it said to itself as it chugged up the grade. Finally as it neared the top the “think I can” was replaced with, “I know I can, I know I can” and it rolled over the top!

The tent for the booth suppliers was righted as were all the other

small tents, but the big top which was to house the lunch crowd was damaged beyond repair. The twisted metal frame was hopelessly mangled. Alternative arrangements would have to be made for lunch. Our little Expo train was almost there but not quite yet.

8:30 a.m., it was time for the field trials to begin. Dr. George Snyder presented research findings on the interactive effects of potassium and sodium on bermudagrass. Dr. Billy Crow discussed nematode control programs with Dr. Robin Giblin-Davis. Drs. Ron Cherry and Russell Nagata talked about new chinch bug-resistant St. Augustinegrass. Dr. Greg Nuessly reported on the control and biology of the recently observed greenbug aphids on seashore paspalum. Dr. Raymond Snyder discussed his work on soil



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South Florida GCSA President Kelly Cragin, left, presents a check for \$31,000 raised at the 2005 South Florida Turf Expo to FGCSA President Joe Pantaleo at the FGCSA spring board meeting in Naples. Photo by Joel Jackson



Turf Expo Coordinator Dr. John Cisar (left) and South Florida GCSA President Kelly Cragin survey the remains of the tents blown down the night before the 2005 Turf Expo. Photo by Dara Park.

amendments and their effect on turfgrass establishment and management.

A new feature at the Expo was project updates by graduate students Dara Park, Matt Brecht, Paucic McGroary and Claudia Arrieta. Subjects discussed: new technologies for documenting water stress and turf quality; ultradwarf bermudagrass disease programs on curvularia and bipolaris; nematode dynamics and application timing; and impact of compaction on goosegrass competition with turf.

Also, Dr. Kimberly Moore hosted a tour of the annuals trial gardens. Dr. Bill Howard led a discussion on insect pests of palms; and Dr. Bill Kern talked about animal problems in the landscape and demonstrated methods to ward off these pests.

At 10 a.m. the booth displays opened – 33 strong, and the air was alive with the sounds of all kinds of bright new equipment that was to die for. Zooming over the research green spraying, mowing, aerifying,

topdressing, rolling – performing all the wonderful things we call “cultural practices.”

While all this was going on, it was time to get our Expo train over the hill. Twenty or more people began moving tables and chairs 200 yards south to the Courtyard lawn for 500 diners.

At high noon, Wiley and Nancy McCall and their staff began ferrying a Bar-B-Que rib lunch with all the trimmings to the hastily arranged lunch site. The McCalls from Environmental Turf get the South Florida chapter’s standing ovation each year for their generous and gracious gesture in coming from Ft. Pierce with their Texas-sized grill and providing the wonderful lunch. To the McCalls,

techs and equipment managers and in the main auditorium an address by Dr. Phil Harmon centered on turf diseases and control options for the turf manager. Matt Brecht followed with a research program update, and then a panel discussion moderated by Dr. Monica Elliot, and consisting of Dr. Lawrence Datnoff, Dr. Carol Stiles, Dr. Phil Harmon, and Matt Brecht, focused on preventive programs, recent trends in turf disease and the use of disease ID labs. It was a most informative and interesting afternoon!

The little Expo train is over the hill, as is this article. Everyone is off to get their CEU forms and be on their way, but before we go, we need to pass out the thank-

you’s: first to Dr. John Cisar and the staff at the FLREC; to Wiley and Nancy McCall, and their wonderful lunch; to all the booth vendors, and equipment suppliers; to Kelly Cragin and the South Florida GCSA board; to Marie Roberts, our association manager who keeps us going in the right direction, making sure all the t’s are crossed and the i’s are dotted and most of all, to all of you who attended and supported the Expo. Thank you one and all. See you next year.

People are visiting while eating lunch and relaxing after a very busy morning. You need a little nourishment and rest, because the afternoon sessions begin at 1:00 pm.

There were concurrent sessions for spray techs, irrigation

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*Par-3, 208-yard  
14th Hole  
The Club at Eaglebrooke  
Photo by Daniel Zelazek*



The Club at Eaglebrooke

# Sometimes You CAN Go Home Again

*By Joel Jackson, CGCS*

The Club at Eaglebrooke lies about six to eight miles due south of the heart of Lakeland and borders the newly dedicated 550-acre Lakeland Highlands Scrub Jay Preserve. The land at one time was part of the vast phosphate mining enterprises that encompassed much of Polk County. Since 1996, Eaglebrooke, a Ron

Garl-designed golf course, has been the semi-private centerpiece for a growing and thriving residential community.

Five years ago, Alan Puckett returned to his hometown to take over the maintenance reins at this challenging 7005-yard golf course and he continues to live out his lifelong dream of

just being a good golf course superintendent. As Puckett noted, "I've done the association thing; now it's time to give back to the community."

Puckett ascribes to the philosophy of "work hard – play hard," something he learned at the elbow of University of Florida's golf turf legend, Dr. G. C. Horn back in Puckett's days at the

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## Course Facts



Eaglebrooke Golf Course Maintenance Staff. Eaglebrooke photo.

### The Club at Eaglebrooke

**Location:** Lakeland

**Ownership:** Paul McDonald, owner and Dale Jacobs, managing partner

**Playing policy:** Semi-private

**Number of holes:** 18; 7005 yards; par 72; six teeing areas per hole.

**Rating/Slope:** 74.0/136 from the tips.

**Designed by:** Ron Garl

**Opened:** 1996

**Management:** Club Manager Cyndi Clark; Head Golf Professional John Greiner; Chef David Dunn; Superintendent Alan Puckett.

**Renovation project:** Redesign of the par-5, 17th hole into a double dogleg with a more user-friendly landing area. Construction by Highland Golf.

**Total acreage under maintenance:** 130 acres

**Greens:** TifDwarf; avg. size 5,800 sq. ft.; total 3.5 acres; HOC.110 in.; overseeding: Poa trivialis and Red Top fescue blend; green speed goals: 10.0 - 11.0.

**Tees:** GN1 bermudagrass; total 3.0 acres; HOC: .400 in.; overseeding: Derby Supreme ryegrass.

**Fairways:** GN1 bermudagrass; total 45 acres; no overseeding.

**Roughs:** GN1 bermudagrass; total 68 acres; no overseeding

**Bunkers:** 52. 37M sand; machine-raked with Toro Sand Pro.

**Native areas:** Waste areas on holes 5, 7, 17; accent plantings of cordgrass; machine-raked twice weekly; cordgrass maintained by manual cultivation and over-the-top spraying as needed.

**Waterways/Lakes:** 7 interconnected lakes; edges and banks maintained by outside contractor.

**Irrigation:** Source – surface water supplemented by reuse storage; Controls – Toro Osmac; fertigation system; head spacing 76 ft.; no watering restrictions currently in effect.

**Water management/conservation:** Daily check of pump house, system check for leaks; Adjust ET rate daily based on weather and turf conditions.

**Staff:** 15 full time including superintendent and 1 part-time student working his way through school; scheduled 40 hrs straight time with 7 hrs overtime biweekly.

**Leadership:** Assistant Superintendent Rick Fountaine, Equipment Technician Brian Sargent, Spray Tech and weekend foreman Bob Cody.

**Communications:** Daily crew operations meeting; weekly club department head staff meeting; biweekly crew/safety meetings; biannual meeting with the members.

**Cultural Programs:** Aerification – greens, tees and fairways 3x per year; Aerification Plus does greens, we do tees and fairways in house. Fairway nutrition – four bulk applications of 15-5-15 per year; spring and fall applications have preemergent herbicides sparged on the fertilizer; supplement with fertigation (24-0-0, 8-0-8 or 6-0-12) monthly depending on time of year. Greens nutrition – alternate granular 13-4-13 with a minors foliar spray biweekly.

**Pest Control:** Apply Chipco Choice annually for mole cricket control; All other insect, weed and disease control is done only as needed except for the two pre-emergent herbicide applications in the spring and fall.

**Management Challenges:** This site is reclaimed phosphate mining land. The heavy soils can get sloppy wet, so we tend to keep the course on the dry side.

**Environment:** We have done a wildlife inventory that includes 114 species of critters and 68 species of birds.

**Special events:** Annual Member-Guest and Club Championship tournaments. We hosted an LPGA Futures Tour event for five years and in October of this year we will host a PGA Championship Tour qualifying event.



Grenelefe Resort in Haines City. Puckett said, "A lot of the industry people owe a lot to Dr. Horn when he was a turf consultant in the booming days of golf course development in Florida. He was a good buffer between the superintendent and the members and explained the agronomy needed to groom golf courses."

*(Editors note: A personal tip of the hat to Dr. Horn: while we didn't have members at Disney World, riding along with him on his consultant visits at the Lake Buena Vista course was my crash course in turf management after majoring in geology. I was better able to understand and communicate to my corporate chain of command because of him.)*

Puckett's 24-year career since graduating from Lake City Community College in 1981 has been spent largely in Polk County. Right out of Lake City he spent two years at the World of Palm Aire in Pompano as a spray-tech/assistant before moving to Walden Lake in Hillsborough County for two years as an assistant. After a five-year stint at Grenelefe as an assistant superintendent, he spent 10 years at the

golf course maintenance helm of the Lake Region Yacht & Country Club in Winter Haven. Puckett had been working himself closer to home with every move. Now he is home.

The lessons learned from Dr. Horn went beyond sound, basic turf management. They included things like, "Work hard every day. That's what they pay you for, but when day is done go home and have a life. Come back tomorrow and work hard again."

Puckett says he feels too many of his peers don't get it and they are burning out too quickly these days.

But people get into the superintendent profession in many ways, and for Puckett it was a matter of connecting with his father Ron who held two jobs each day: English professor in the mornings and club tennis pro in the afternoons. Puckett took a job in the club's cart barn just so he could spend more time around his dad. In the process he fell in love with the golf industry. By the time kids in high school were wondering what the future held in store for them, Puckett knew he wanted to be a golf course superintendent and he has been living his dream ever since.

Eaglebrooke gave Puckett the chance

to come home and he takes that opportunity seriously as he has spent time learning to work the land placed under his command. There is always a learning curve when a new superintendent takes over and one of the biggest for Puckett was getting used to having homes bordering the golf course.

"It was a big adjustment for me to have homes on the course. Scheduling work took on a new meaning when I had to consider noise levels and dusty operations like bulk fertilizer applications and aerification-core clean-up on fairways."

Getting to know the course and how it responds to nutrient and cultural practices is also an important piece of the management puzzle and one that members often don't consider when making superintendent changes. In Puckett's case, irrigation management is critical for Eaglebrooke's playability and customer satisfaction. He explained, "Much of this property is reclaimed phosphate mining land and the soil is fine textured and readily holds moisture, so I have learned to keep it on the dry side to allow for rainfall or a necessary heavy irrigation. It can get a little sloppy out there if it gets too wet."

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The par-3, third hole borders one of seven interconnected lakes on the course. Note the guy ropes on the trees behind the green - necessary reminders of the 2004 hurricane season. Photo by Daniel Zelazek.

To the club's credit they replaced the old equipment when Puckett came on board so

he had some good tools to work with to give them the best course that he could. It wasn't long

before Puckett discovered some of the problems revolved around pH issues, which he controls

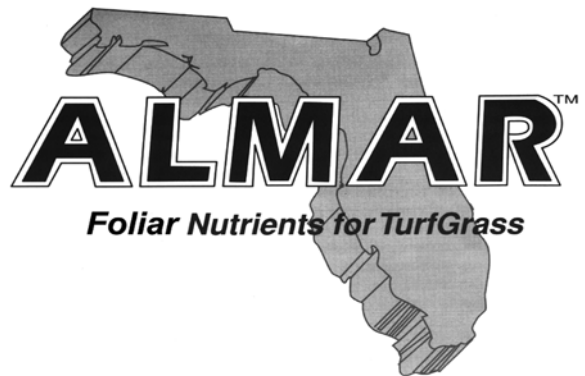
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