

Live oaks from Arvida's Southwood GC to be used for Navy's reconstruction of 'Old Ironsides'

By ANDREW OVERBECK

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Instead of burning the 160 live oak trees cleared to build Arvida's Southwood Golf Course here, MacCurrach Golf Course Construction brokered a three way deal to donate 50 of the trees to the United States Navy to aid in the restoration of the USS Constitution.

The agreement was a win-win-win situation.

"We had less timber to burn, the Navy got the material for nothing, and Arvida appeased the community by finding a positive use for the cleared trees," said Allan MacCurrach, whose company is building the Gene Bates and Fred Couples-designed layout.

The Constitution, which went into service in 1797, is the oldest fully commissioned warship in the world. During the War of 1812, the warship took on the nickname of "Old Ironsides" after winning a battle with the British frigate HMS Guerriere. The Constitution, which is constructed of solid live oak, easily deflected enemy fire, leading the British to think the ship's sides were made of iron.

The Navy has been slowly restoring the ship and began stockpiling live oak trees in 1992. The sections of trees taken from the Southwood site will be used for the reconstruction of the ship's hull framing.

MacCurrach came up with the idea to give the trees to the USS Constitution late last summer.

"Part of my family is from Boston and when we were up there this summer, I heard that the ship was built with live oaks from north Florida," said MacCurrach. "When we took the trees down late last summer, I called the local Navy base and started asking around. You could hear the laughing on the other end of the phone, but three days later I got in touch with the USS Constitution maintenance facility in Charlestown, Mass."

This fall, Gary Morrissette a technical writer with the Navy, came down to look over the trees.

"We went out and made marks on the trees to get the proper curve that we want," said Morrissette. "Two hundred years ago when the ship was built there were a lot of old growth trees, now it is hard to find ones that are big enough and have the right curve in them."

The trees will be used to create a new hull framing, which is made up of sections that are 12 inches thick and 24 inches wide.

All three parties made some sacrifices as part of the deal. MacCurrach had to move the trees to a storage site, Arvida paid an arborist \$3,000 to make the proper cuts on the trees and the Navy has yet to arrange trans-

port of the trees back to Charlestown.

"We are working on coordinating with the Navy base down there and will have them on the way back here by June," said Morrissette. "We will start put-

ting the framing together in preparation for a planned overhaul in 2008."

Southwood Golf Course is still under construction and is due to open in September. ■



Logs cut from the Southwood site await transport to Charlestown, Mass.

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