

LANDSCAPE PROFILE



Rae Price travelled to Spain to research resorts before beginning work on the Grand Champions in Palm Springs.

Pilot Pen Classic in February.

A 36-hole championship golf course, being built by the city of Indian Wells, will be nestled into the resort. The course is a Ted Robinson design.

The suffocating heat last summer forced Price's crew of six to start work at 4:30 a.m. Record-breaking temperatures of up to 117 degrees also placed a lot of stress on plant materials, making transplants difficult.

Because of the heat, about 12 of the 15 acres are irrigated. Still, to further protect the trees, Price's staff placed "bubblers" at the base of each tree.

"We got about 25 percent of our plant materials from southern California nurseries so we wouldn't have a problem with their acclimation to the heat," Price says.

But by the time Grand Champions opens, the mercury should have fallen to normal levels. The resort is intended to be a luxurious escape for people fending off the approaching winter blues.

WT&T

TURBULENT SEA PINES

From lawsuits to hurricanes, the landscape at Sea Pines Resort on Hilton Head Island has nonetheless withstood the test of time.

The headline in the *Savannah Morning News* reads: **Charles Fraser Files 3 Lawsuits Against Sea Pines' Owners.** Those who live on Hilton Head Island aren't surprised.

It's not the first time Fraser, founder and developer of Sea Pines resort area, has sued. The battle began in 1983 when Sea Pines area merged with the Hilton Head Co. and was sold the next year to Rolyat, a south Florida lending institution.

During the Governors' Conference in August, the island tried to cover up \$100 million in lawsuit claims filed during an eight-month period.

The suits involve property sales and corporate decisions affecting almost half of the island's 25,000 acres.

Sea Pines, the island's oldest resort, (planning began in 1950) has 5,280 acres of developed property. But Gale Smyly, Sea Pines' landscaping director, hasn't seen his million-dollar budget suffer because of the debates.

The resort has, however, admittedly suffered from this summer's drought and three hard winters in a row. But only a true expert could pick out any flaws in Sea Pines' picturesque setting at the tip of Hilton Head Island.



Perhaps the most recognized part of Hilton Head Island is "Liberty Oak," with Harbour Town's candy-striped lighthouse in the background.

The highest standards

"In the resort industry, you have to do a lot of volume to turn a profit," says Smyly, who has been with the company for 14 years. "Particularly here on Hilton Head Island, you have to have a very high standard for the final product—from your landscape management to fine china."

Despite his respect for the current management, Smyly remains in awe of Fraser, the man who at age 21 had a vision of Sea Pines as a thriving resort.

Pointing to perhaps the most recognized part of the island, the large oak tree called "Liberty Oak," with Harbour Town's candy-striped lighthouse in its background, Smyly explains that it took an extra \$60,000 from Fraser to save the tree when the harbor was developed.

"Charles Fraser had a photographic, projective mind," Smyly says. "The way the buildings are set in conjunction with the landscape...there's no negotiation there between man and nature. It all just comes together."

And it's Smyly's job to keep it together. During the resort season, which runs from March 1 to Sept. 1, Smyly and his summer staff of 48 (it dwindles to about 25 in the winter) are responsible for more than 300 acres: villa properties, clubhouses, the Hilton Head Inn, restaurants, and Harbour Town village.

Villa management produces revenue which supplements the regular budget. But Smyly calls it a thankless job. "There are 5,000 property owners who all have their own green thumbs and their own direction to follow," he says.

The four golf courses in Sea Pines are maintained by others although Smyly occasionally helps out a superintendent. (One time, his crew had seven days to plant 1,000 azaleas on a course before a big tournament.)

Varieties of turf

Although Charles Fraser is the vision behind the resort, landscape architect Robert Marvin designed many of the areas. The Greenery, a local landscape contractor, did most of the original installations.

Turf on the island consists of the three major warm-season varieties: hybrid bermudagrass, centipede, and St. Augustine. "Centipede is a hardy grass," explains Smyly. "The golf courses use bermuda for its aesthetic

value, and St. Augustine grows well under the shade of the large oak trees."

Besides oaks and live oaks, characterized by willowy branches drooping over roads, the island's most abundant trees are palms. Ornamental pampas grass adds a tropical look to many of the villas. It also helps naturally control erosion.

Some native plant materials haven't survived the recent harsh

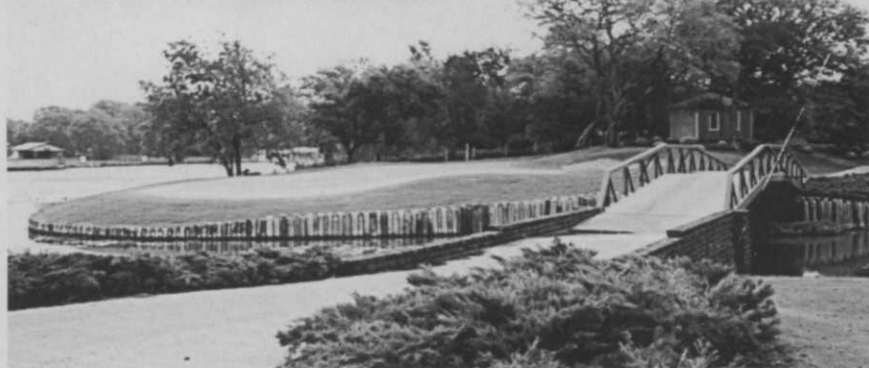
winters. "We've had to redirect our thinking to late-blooming materials," says Smyly.

Unusual weather still doesn't weigh as heavily on Smyly's mind as does the threat of a hurricane. Hurricane David in 1979 forced evacuation of the island. "It's like Russian roulette," he says.

"Eventually it's going to happen."

—Heide Aungst

A COOL BREEZE IN TEXAS



One of the reasons for the popularity of Horseshoe Bay is the ample water supply, a pleasant change from other Southwestern resorts. The 16th hole at Applerock, one of three courses at the resort, provides a picturesque setting.

Draw a mental image of south central Texas. Include cacti, tumble weed, dust, and pancake-flat prairie stretching as far as the eye can see.

But some Texans just north of Austin have a secret oasis—a place that looks more like Eden than Tombstone Gulch. Tucked into 50 miles of rolling, fertile green hills is a series of sparkling channel lakes, beginning with Lake Austin and ending with Lyndon B. Johnson Lake in Marble Falls. Alongside "Lake LBJ," the striking beauty of this unexpected hill country reaches its pinnacle at Horseshoe Bay Country Club (HBCC) Resort, where you can follow roads like "Bay West," and "Smuggler's Cove."

"The hills and the lakes definitely set us apart from most Southwestern resorts," says Alan Houdek, the HBCC director of golf course and amenity grounds maintenance. "But we have some other things we're proud of here that keep people coming back year after year."

When HBCC opened in 1971 on

what was previously the Coca-Cola Ranch, it was primarily a yacht club, marina, and riding stables. Today, additions include 14 tennis courts (four under a dome) and 54 golf holes. The 4,600-acre resort is the largest Robert Trent Jones-designed complex in the continental United States.

And golf is the drawing card. "Our primary clientele are the retirees who own homes here," Houdek says. "They live here because of the golf."

Another factor is the resort's aesthetic appeal—the kind of appeal that involves hard work and expert care. Owner Norman Hurd favors Oriental influences in the landscape: statues, fountains, and sculptured ornamentals.

Torrid Texas winters

This year is Houdek's 13th at HBCC. He's experienced some challenges the past few years.

Two years—1984 and 1985—were entirely out of character for south central Texas' climate. Both years,