PROFILE

JIM MANTHEY
King Of The Course

If you’ve played on some of southern Florida’s top golf courses – Doral, PGA National, Seminole, Jupiter Hills and Boca West – with their lush fairways and well-maintained greens and bunkers, it’s likely Boca Raton resident Jim Mantey had something to do with it.

As president and CEO of Hector Turf, a nearly century old South Florida grounds maintenance and irrigation equipment sales and service company, Mantey’s equipment has been mowing grass, raking sand traps and manicuring greens on just about every golf course from Vero Beach to Key West and across the Caribbean. Yet the man who grew up in Sharon Springs, Kan., a small farming and ranch community whose current claim to fame is its annual May Rattlesnake Roundup, took a circuitous route to arrive at his current destination – a 75,000-square-foot Deerfield Beach warehouse and office complex.

Filled with multi-bladed golf course mowers, utility carts, irrigation pipe and sprinkler heads for use on golf course properties, resorts, sports fields and municipalities, the warehouse is a far cry from where he thought his electrical engineering degree from Notre Dame would take him.

After college, he worked for Westinghouse Electric Company in Pennsylvania, then transferred with the company to Washington D.C. Wanting to further his education, he attended graduate school and earned an MBA in finance from the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania. Then he took a leap of faith.

“I came to Florida on the fly to work for Eastern Airlines in Miami,” Mantey says. “They had 26 L-1011s at the time, and as a logistics and financial analyst, I was to figure out how we could maximize their financial potential.”

With the airline’s financial woes just around the corner, Mantey foresaw the writing on the wall. Ready to “get out of there,” he received a call from an old friend who asked if he’d be interested in coming up to Boca Raton to work for Arvida, the successful real estate development company. Without a second thought, in 1975 Mantey packed up his wife Gloria and their two small children, Michael and Jennifer, and headed to the largely undeveloped Boca Raton where Arvida was king.

Mantey worked in the Arvida office on South Federal Highway as director of business development and got involved in such projects as the Boca Raton Hotel Cabana Club and Beach Club Hotel. Then they had an opening for a general manager at Boca West. He took it.

“People from the hotel thought they were going to a western outpost,” Mantey recalls. “Once you got to the water plant and went west past I-95, there wasn’t anything. The polo field was on the north at Butts and Glades Road and orange groves were on the south. Past the polo field there were vegetable farms, then you hit the turnpike.”

Mantey’s years as general manager of the community’s largest country club development came packed with a suitcase full of fond memories. He was there during southern Florida’s first recorded snowstorm in 1977, Arvida’s Pepsi Grand Slam, the first Golf Digest Schools, Bill Rodgers’ Fun Run, the Johnnie Walker Celebrity Golf Match, and the American League vs. the National League All Stars slow pitch softball tournament. He also rubbed elbows with such celebrities as golf pro Sam Sneed, trick shot artist Paul Hahn Jr., and tennis star Chris Evert, who purchased a home at Boca West. Other celebrities included Carl Yastrzemski, Jane Blaylock and world-renowned golf instructors Bob Toski, Jim Flick, Jack Lumpkin, John Eliot Jr., Peter Kostis and Davis Love Jr.

After three years, Mantey was sent to Sawgrass, an Arvida community in Ponte Vedra that was just getting off the ground. A year later, he returned to Boca Raton to work on Broken Sound, another Arvida golf course community. He eventually left Arvida and purchased a Toro Turf Equipment and Supply Company distributorship in Eldridge, Md. But his wife suffered from asthma, so they returned to Florida in 1981.

When the Hector Turf distributorship in Miami became available in May 1982, Mantey purchased the 75-year-old privately owned business. Keeping its name, in 1987 he moved the company that has the exclusive distributorship for the Toro, Lawn-Boy and Club Car (turf vehicle) lines of equipment to Deerfield Beach, where it would be closer to the center of his territory.

During this time, the Manteyes adopted a daughter, Laura. Shortly thereafter, the family’s joy was tempered with sorrow when Gloria passed away. Two years later, Mantey met and married Sandra Nunn, then the South Florida director of Federal Express.

“We met through a mutual friend who bugged me until I went out on a blind date,” Mantey says. “I persisted, and we ended up getting married.”

Sandra now works for Hector Turf as executive vice president and handles human resources and operations. Mantey’s son Mike has also joined the company and manages customer service and the residential and commercial equipment division.

The Manteyes live a quiet life complete with a chocolate lab named Sadie and three cats. They attend St. Joan of Arc Catholic Church, where Mantey has been a member since 1975, and they have an intimate circle of friends with whom they enjoy socializing.

Mantey said his hope is to spend less time with the company and eventually turn it over to his son. Then he’ll be able to travel out west, do a little fishing, and spend time at a yet-to-be-purchased second home either in North Carolina or southwest Virginia.

The man who has spent much of his time making sure South Florida golf courses are kept in tip-top shape would also like to have time to actually play on one.

“We play some now, but it isn’t enough,” Mantey says. With future plans in place, perhaps that will soon become a reality.