



J. Foster Pate

10/31/2011

J. Foster Pate was born in Rochester, NY, on April 18, 1928. A congenital problem with his aorta resulted in him being the 19th cardiovascular surgery in the world in 1946. When the defect could not be repaired at that time, Foster embraced life with the attitude of making the most of each day. He moved to Ft. Myers in 1956, and bought 2,000 acres of land in what was then the sleepy area south of Ft. Myers. This purchase included a three mile stretch extending from Page Field to Daniel's Road, one mile deep to Ten Mile Canal. His first development was Ft. Myers Villas at a time when current building didn't extend much beyond Hanson Street. Foster followed the advice given to him by Carl Johnson and saved as many trees as possible as he developed the land. In 1957, Foster returned to Boston where new medical technologies allowed him to receive a transplant that repaired his aorta.

Foster discovered that the lack of building and zoning standards in Lee County allowed unscrupulous builders to pour foundations without steel reinforcing rods so he successfully petitioned the county commission to institute the first building codes. When Arlo Diebler arrived in Ft. Myers with the hope of establishing a symphony orchestra, Foster joined local attorney Bill Sheppard in funding the endeavor for the first few years until a Board and Foundation could be established. Foster was one of several businessmen who donated the money to purchase the land for Edison Community College and later donated again to establish a Nursing Chair. As the Villas grew into a flourishing community, Foster donated the land for Villas Elementary School as well as the South Trail Fire Station. He also served as an unpaid Sheriff's deputy to provide law enforcement coverage to the south part of the county and even assisted in the birth of a baby during Hurricane Donna. Foster provided the county with its first nursing home when he opened Beacon Manor in 1963, and was instrumental in the establishment of several banks. Foster also funded a scholarship at FGCU in honor of his parents.

While Foster expanded his original land purchase by adding Villa Pines, a Sheraton Hotel, and several commercial buildings, his next major endeavor was the first of its kind locally. He built an all-inclusive resort community, The Landings Yacht and Racquet Club, located along McGregor Boulevard. The beautifully landscaped development with a marina, country club, and golf and tennis courts remains a premier location to this day. Foster's last major development, Fiddlesticks, initiated the building boom along Daniels Parkway.

Foster was predeceased by his parents, Jane and C. Bertrem Pate, Sr. and his brother, C.B. (Bud) Pate, Jr. He leaves behind his wife, Sherry, and her extended family; his daughter, Paula, her husband Al Pfeiffer and their children, Mariah and Ian; his son, Jeff (J.F. Pate, Jr.), Jeff's wife Darice and children, Kirsten, Audrey, Jon (J.F. Pate III), and Geoffrey; and son, Garrett Pate and Ann Tycer as well as Foster's sister, Nancy Wallace and her family and the family of his brother, Bud. Foster also leaves two "surrogate sons:" Philip Weisner of NYC and David Kehler of Marion, NC.

A celebration of Foster's life will be held at The Landings Clubhouse (5200 S. Landings Drive, Ft. Myers) on Dec. 4 at 11:00 AM followed by a brunch. This man of remarkable vision and entrepreneurship will be missed by all who loved him. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to Harry Chapin Food Bank, 3760 Fowler Street, Ft. Myers, FL 33901.