

# scene

THE PEOPLE'S MAGAZINE OF OUR COMMUNITY

Neal Communities Presents

## Silverwood

Elegant Country Club Living  
at Lakewood Ranch

LPGA Darling

**Paula Creamer**

by Silke Ribble

**Local Celebrities**

Favorite Spots

Graci's Mission:

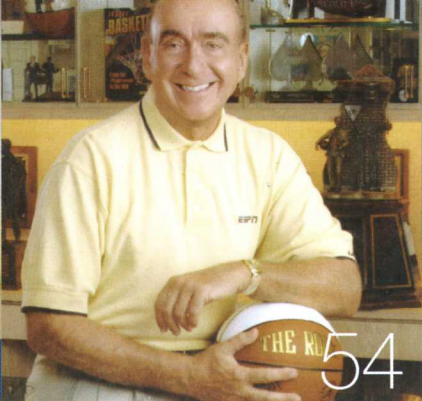
**The Child  
Protection  
Center**

by Cliff Roles



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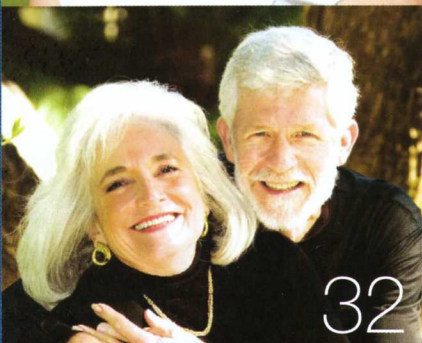




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Neal Communities Presents Silverwood —  
Where a Journey To A Handshake Begins





## Charles Varah and John Neal: Making It Easy To Hit the Links at University Park Country Club

*By Barbara Ann Weibel*



As a teenager, John Neal spent every summer astride a riding lawnmower at University Park Country Club. He learned to operate a backhoe on the golf course before he was old enough to drive. Even before the development existed, Neal accompanied his grandfather on hunting forays on the land that would become the award-winning community, thus it was no surprise recently when Neal purchased his father's interest in the Country Club.

John's father, Pat Neal, discovered the site in the late 1970s but did not have the funds to purchase the property. Simultaneously, English industrialist, Rolf Pasold, was eyeing the same 1000-acre parcel. A fortuitous meeting between the two resulted in a partnership, with Pasold purchasing the land and granting Neal exclusive development rights. They finished the 27-hole golf course first, building the Pro Shop and restaurant on a prime site overlooking the largest water feature, and then began building houses surrounding the links.

Since the property was a hunting preserve that had never been clear-cut, the partners were passionate about designing a course that was true to the lay of the land and preserved the natural vegetation. "The traditional Florida golf course is flat, open, and the holes are intermingling," the younger Neal explains. "University Park is a tight, well-designed course, sculpted out of the land. Each hole is on its own, challenging." The differences are quickly apparent. Undulating fairways are lined with century-old trees dripping Spanish moss. Hawks circle above and giant Heron wade in the ponds. Rather than a traditional clubhouse that incorporates all services under one roof, the facilities are built campus style, with separate tennis, golf, and fitness clubhouses.

John Neal and Charles Varah, who has for many years represented the Pasold interest, personally oversee day-to-day operations at the club. "We strive to make this a financially viable, socially interesting club by maintaining the facilities in prime condition, hosting unique events, and making membership available to the general public on a limited basis," says Varah. "It's personal for us," adds Neal. "We have a history here and we're committed to ensuring its continued success." With benefits that include advance tee times, special dinners, and events like the enormously popular Trivia Challenge, University Park Country Club is averaging one new member per day at a time when membership at most clubs is declining.

Full, tennis, sports, and social memberships are available and the Club is currently offering special promotional pricing for a limited time. For more information, contact Ann Backus, at 941-355-3888, Ext. 234. **S**