

Outstanding In His Field

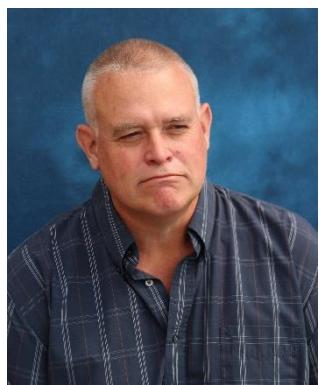
By Ronda Roemmelt Sneider, Ruppert Nurseries

Last month, I wrote a piece entitled, "Losing A Friend." It was a tribute to a stately oak in one of our fields that lost its fight against a lightning strike. Little could I have known when I wrote that piece last month that we would indeed lose a real friend just a few short weeks later.

For those that haven't heard, our friend, colleague and long-time source of big tree wisdom, Joe Proskine, passed away suddenly on Saturday, December 5th. Joe had been struggling with a number of health issues for quite a long time but had recently begun to experience a host of collateral health problems that ultimately all conspired to his passing. Joe will be so missed for so many reasons not the least of which was his seemingly endless knowledge of how to move and care for big trees.



Joe was a friendly, talkative, outgoing guy who was easily likeable. A brief conversation with Joe was a rarity, but if I'm being honest, our Ruppert Nurseries family is chock full of talkers! Joe fit right in and despite his gift of gab was often not the most loquacious in the group, which says A LOT! Joe had a goofy sense of humor and always seemed to be laughing at something. He was often smiling and when truly happy and amused, his smile was enormous and genuine. His entire face would light up and his eyes would crinkle. It's difficult to be in a bad mood when someone around you is perpetually cheerful.



Joe had friends in every corner of the industry. I am pretty sure EVERYONE knew who Joe Proskine was. He was a member of the Professional Grounds Maintenance Association, a regular at on the Golf Course Superintendents Association events as well as LCA, MNLGA and a host of other industry events and groups both social and professional. A legend for sure, gone too soon. Craig Ruppert fondly recalls Joe as always being optimistic and quick to laugh. Craig also notes that over the more than 20 years he knew and worked with Joe he was always dedicated to

our profession and took pride in his professional reputation. Another of Joe's admirable traits that Craig recalled was that he was always learning. He made a point to attend as many classes as was practical to keep his knowledge up to date.

Joe's long-time friend and frequent golf partner, John Driscoll, had this to say about him, "Joe was the kind of guy who always has some sort of bad idea that somehow seemed a good idea at the time." John fondly remembered that back in the day (Ruppert Landscape Version 1; when John was purchasing for Maryland Landscape and Joe was purchasing for the Environmental branch) the two of them approached Joe's boss, Rich Schubach, with the plan to allow them to share an office so they could better utilize each other's resources. This was an uncommon practice back in those days as despite sharing the same facility, they worked for different branches. Rich Schubach, not usually one to shy away from trouble himself, somehow had the wherewithal to deny that request citing that more bad than good was likely to come from that idea.

John went on to say that another brilliant idea they once came up with was to open a bar in partnership with another long-time friend, Stan Clements. This bar would have been aptly named, "Pour Decisions". I am told that the idea was unanimously voted down by their wives but I for one would have liked to belly up to that bar. Lord knows that during those early Ruppert days we all shared many a drink together at the Stained Glass Pub in Olney.

Another life-long friend of Joe's, Rob Gerard, recalls when he first started at Ruppert he quickly learned that Joe was "one of those individuals who was always ready to help, to lend a hand and to see what he could do to make something go." Rob tells the story that when he first started at Ruppert, it was at an unfortunate period of time when his car was in the shop for several weeks. His new friend and co-worker Joe drove from his home in Mt. Airy to Kemptown to pick up Rob and bring him to work every day until his car was fixed. This carpool friendship led to many laughs, lots of golf, a memorable Vegas trip, a bunch of tailgating and many years of good times and friendship.



From left: Joe Proskine, John Driscoll, Stan Clements, Scott Greenberg, Bruce Carrol, Brian Snyder, Lee Parker, Donald O'Connor and Rob Gerard

Despite the plethora of “poor decisions”, Joe made plenty of good ones. Joe leaves behind a wife, Stacy to whom he had been married for 26 years. He has two grown children, Michael and Sarah, and a daughter, Lily, who is currently a senior in high school. He is also survived by his seven grandchildren of whom he was so proud and loved to talk about and share photos. Spend five minutes with Joe and you would know how important his family was to him.

They say that “The true meaning of life is to plant trees under whose shade you do not expect to sit.” Joe will have carried out this objective thousands of times over. The DC Metro area is a living monument to one of the greatest tree loving professionals out there.

We will miss you, Joe. I hope you are strolling through a field of trees, able to use both feet with ease and enjoying the sights and sounds around you. The many years you were above this earth, improved the world for many generations to come.

Rest easy, or whatever.



Ronda Roemmelt Sneider
ISA Certified Arborist

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ronda Roemmelt Sneider".