

# A man of 'devotion and good counsel': McGrath dies at 87



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John W. McGrath, a Yale Law School classmate of Charles E. Fraser who became an unsung contributor to the early development of Sea Pines on Hilton Head Island, has died.

McGrath, 87, of Honolulu, died June 27, following a brief illness, according to an obituary in the Honolulu Star-Advertiser.

"He was the unsung guy," said David Pearson, who was on a small team of young executives with McGrath at Sea Pines in the early 1960s.

"He probably did more to create the Sea Pines success but got the least credit for it because when the fame started to build, he was gone."

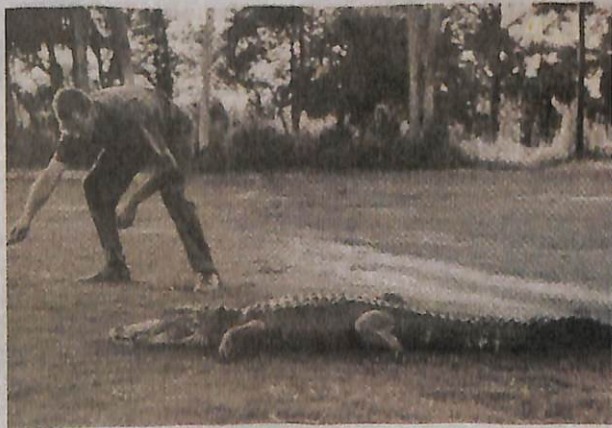
McGrath, a tall and handsome single man who had been a standout athlete at Amherst College, was enticed to Sea Pines by Fraser when there was little for Fraser to sell but a vision.

McGrath from the outset tried to justify the economics of Fraser's dream to develop 5,000 acres on the southern tip of the island. It had just gotten its first bridge, it did not yet have telephone service and there was nothing much for McGrath to lean on for statistics than the 1950 census.

McGrath worked for another developer but returned to Sea Pines from 1959 to 1963, most of it as executive vice president.

"Upon John's return to Sea Pines, he thoroughly analyzed the situation and offered a candid assessment to (Fraser) that 'you've got a really big problem; you don't have any money,'" says a 2016 book about McGrath's

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From "Amongst the Mythmakers: Recollections of John Williams McGrath"

John McGrath grabbed a stick to help keep the large alligator named Albert on the Sea Pines golf course while the Saturday Evening Post photographer set up the iconic shot with Charles Fraser that brought national attention to the fledgling resort in 1962.