

The bankruptcy threatened not only individual livelihoods, but the reputation of Hilton Head as a first-class resort and the future of the island's premier sporting event, the Heritage Classic professional golf tournament. National media swarmed to Hilton Head to cover the story of a premier resort falling into disrepute.

The island company had been wrested from developer Bobby Ginn earlier in 1986 and put in the hands of a New York businessman, Philip Schwab. But Schwab's financial empire collapsed, along with the savings and loan industry, pulling down the Hilton Head properties.

Schwab was supposed to prop up the failing island company. Instead, he started pulling money out of Hilton Head. Schwab said that his net worth at the time he took control of the company was \$50 million to \$60 million; he estimated in 1987 that he owed \$500 million.

When asked in October 1987 what he had told people he would do to save the company, Schwab replied, "Nobody ever asked me."

U.S. District Judge Sol Blatt Jr., who appointed Curry as trustee, and former S.C. Gov. John West succeeded in getting the South Carolina properties separated from the rest of Schwab's holdings. Blatt took the rare step of holding on to the bankruptcy case rather than turn it over to a U.S. Bankruptcy Court judge. Blatt for many years owned a house in Palmetto Dunes and was a longtime friend of West.

Blatt, West and Curry had no bankruptcy experience. (At one of the first hearings in the case, Blatt described himself and West as "the blind leading the blind.") Curry's resort operations experience brought him to the table.

The challenge was to balance what they thought was right for Hilton Head with the pressures to sell the company's assets for the most money possible to pay off creditors. Those competing interests made for fiery court hearings, and it eventually resulted in Blatt's removal from the case by the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals. The court said Blatt's Hilton Head ties had created at least the appearance of a conflict of interest.

Blatt's activism was extremely unusual, but the fear of lasting repercussions for Hilton Head was palpable. In January 1987, Blatt said, "I'm not going to supervise the demise of Hilton Head Island when I can stop it."

Throughout 1987, Curry and his team struggled to keep resort and real estate operations going while figuring out how to keep the gated communities caught in the bankruptcy as intact as possible.

KEEPING THE HERITAGE

Saving the Heritage also was a primary goal. The PGA Tour was unhappy with the condition of Harbour Town Golf Links, where the Heritage was played. The course had been neglected as the Sea Pines Co.'s fortunes sank. Making matters worse was that the purse check for another Tour event held at Harbour Town in the fall of 1986 had bounced.

Curry flew to Jacksonville, Fla., to meet with the PGA Tour commissioner. When told the only way to keep the Heritage was to sell Harbour Town Golf Links to the Tour, Curry got up and walked out. It worked.

The tournament stayed, and Curry then leaned on Angus Cotton, who had moved to the island in 1981 as general manager of the Marriott resort hotel in Shipyards, to produce a \$1 million letter of credit from local businesses to guarantee the purse for the 1987 tournament. To do it, they formed the non-profit Heritage Classic Foundation to stage the tournament. To date, that group's charitable giving from tournament proceeds has topped \$16 million.

In the end, the bankrupt company's Sea Pines assets went to residents of that community who put together their own company, Sea Pines Associates. Most of the other properties went back to mortgage holder Marathon Oil Co. Indigo Run ended up in the hands of the Federal Resolution Trust Corp. and was sold to the Melrose Co. in 1991.

After getting baptized in the arcane world of bankruptcy law, Curry continued to work as a trustee in many other cases.

'HEADS IN BEDS'

But Curry's most enduring legacy will be his work in tourism.

"Before John, we had tourism but it was almost always linked to selling real estate," Cotton said. "He was interested in putting heads in beds and pushing tourism in the off-peak months."

Curry and Cotton took countless trips to cold cities, pitching the island and offering tourism leaders there free stays back on Hilton Head.

Friends say that no matter where Curry went around the world, he always seemed to know people.

Cotton and others worked with Curry to shape the state Accommodations Tax Act in 1984. With assurances that part of the 2 percent tax on overnight lodging would go to local tourism marketing and to local organizations to promote tourism, Curry helped sell it to skeptical industry leaders statewide.

Curry, who led the island's Visitor and Convention Bureau for 17 years, also pushed legislation to relax state liquor laws and allow Sunday sales.

"He was very pragmatic," Cotton said, "very pragmatic. In the arts and education and a lot of other ways people didn't see, he was behind the scenes trying to smooth the way and work things out."

FLYING HIGH

To understand Curry's involvement with the airport, one first must understand his passion for flying, said David Ames, chairman of county Aviation Advisory Board and a close friend of Curry's. They shared office space for 20 years.

"I think he was happiest in the air," Ames said. "He just loved the adventure and the freedom flying gave him."

As a tourism leader, Curry also understood how important the airport is to the economy and the island experience, Ames said.

"John believed the airport provided an essential support for the standard of life on the island," he said. "The convenience of the island airport is tremendously important, and John knew that. And coming from the service business, he knew it was important how a passenger feels about Hilton Head when getting off that airplane. He was always looking for ways to make the airport better, and he spent whatever time it took."

Bill Miles, president and CEO of the Hilton Head Island-Bluffton Chamber of Commerce, said, "The Hilton Head Island we know today is in part due to the tireless efforts of John, with his wonderful obsession to get it right and make this the unique destination it has become. He created a lasting legacy for us all, with courage, true grit, determination and with a real grace and style that was all his own."

In memory of John Curry.

A memorial service for John Curry, 78, is at 2 p.m. Monday at First Presbyterian Church, 540 William Hilton Parkway.

Surviving are his wife of 36 years, Valerie; three sons, David (Rozana) Curry of Burbank, Calif., Edward (Kelly) Curry of Toluca Lake, Calif., and Donn Curry of Portland, Ore.; two grandchildren, Matthew and Adam Curry; a brother, David Curry of Berkeley, Calif.; and a former daughter-in-law, Lynn

Curry. He was preceded in death by his twin sister, Jeanette; and his first wife, Martha Weathersbee Curry.

100-YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF METHODIST HOSPITAL, INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA

HON. ANDRÉ CARSON

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 2, 2008

Mr. CARSON of Indiana. Madam Speaker, today I rise to honor the 100-year anniversary of the Methodist Hospital in Indianapolis, Indiana. I am fortunate to have such a hospital facility in my district. Over 100 years ago, on October 25, 1905, the cornerstone for Methodist Hospital was laid. Three years later, in 1908, the hospital was open to the public. Patient fees started at \$7 a week and the hospital adopted a policy to care for the impoverished at no charge. Many things have changed since then. The hospital has grown in size and provides new services to fit the ever-growing needs of the city. But many things have stayed the same. The hospital's commitment to serve the disadvantaged and provide state-of-the-art, innovative medical care is as important a part of Methodist's mission today as it was 100 years ago.

Methodist Hospital has always been on the forefront of health care. During the baby boom of the 1940s, it established the first premature birth station in the state. Methodist was the first Indiana hospital to perform open-heart surgery, in 1965. Seven years later, in 1972, its doctors performed the state's first kidney transplant. In 1982 the world's first successful heart transplant at a private hospital was performed at Methodist, followed 7 years later by the performance of the state's first heart lung transplant.

Today, Methodist is one of only two adult regional Level 1 Trauma centers in Indiana. It houses an 899-bed facility and is one of the largest teaching hospitals in the Midwest. It runs the Indiana Poison Center in addition to staffing the LifeLine helicopter ambulances. Additionally, Methodist is also the official health care provider for the Indianapolis Motor Speedway.

Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate all the doctors, nurses and health care professionals for being part of such an exceptional health care organization and thank them for their dedication to the health and well-being of the people of Indiana.

HONORING JEREMY JAMES FAJEN

HON. SAM GRAVES

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 2, 2008

Mr. GRAVES. Madam Speaker, I proudly pause to recognize Jeremy James Fajen of Blue Springs, Missouri. Jeremy is a very special young man who has exemplified the finest qualities of citizenship and leadership by taking an active part in the Boy Scouts of America, Troop 1763, and earning the most prestigious award of Eagle Scout.

Jeremy has been very active with his troop, participating in many Scout activities. Over the