



# A Windward View of Terra Vista

...the Other Side of Florida

by Jane Jarlenski

**T**he Villages of Citrus Hills and Terra Vista exemplify gracious Florida living where you can perfect the game of life! It began with two friends, Sam Tamposi and Gerry Nash, who purchased land in the heart of Citrus County north of Tampa during the 1960's and eventually controlled 4000 acres of rolling hills and fields. Citrus County is called Florida's Nature Coast because of its abundant resources. Seven of Florida's water bodies lie within its borders with the Withlacoochee River defining the county's border. The Nature Coast is unique in its beauty and topography.

In the 1980's, Gerry and Sam began to develop their land into a project appropriately named The Villages of Citrus Hills. Today, this property



consists of more than 20 villages. They first developed the roads and built a golf course, clubhouse, and restaurant. This endeavor has grown and now encompasses the following communities, to name a few: Clearview Estates, Cambridge Greens, Celina Hills, Kensington, Fairview, Presidential, Forest Ridge, First Addition, Lexington Greens, Canterbury Lake, Brentwood, Belmont Hills, Hillside Villas, The Hamptons, Skyview, and Windward Village.

Windward Village is quite a unique community in several ways. It falls under the canopy of the master community of Terra Vista of Citrus Hills. Its special location sets Windward Village apart from others. According to George Sleeman, Director of Sales and Marketing for Terra Vista at Citrus Hills, Sam and Gerry always envisioned “the hill” would be something really special one day. What they began as home-site sales has grown into the larger role of Developer and Builder. “...What was really the beginning of the Terra Vista portion of Citrus Hills is Windward Village,” George says. “The hill” in the village is paramount—the highest point in Citrus County. No flood insurance needed here.

Gerry and Sam had a good friend who helped develop Windward Village by lending his name to the project. This friend was baseball hall of fame hitter, Ted Williams. Ted built the first home in Windward Village on the pinnacle of the development site—“the hill.” He remained a long-term spokesperson for the venture.

In the beginning, the development embraced a baseball theme. Ted lived, naturally, on Ted Williams Court. The main street winding through the hilly community is called Fenway Drive. Jim Mills, the president of Windward Villages Property Owners Association, lives on Mickey Mantle







Path. Other street names include Red Sox Path, Yaz Point, Killabrew Court, Yawkey Point, and Mays Path. Mills said that Windward Village, established in 2000, today consists of 323 estate home-sites.

Originally from Illinois, Jim and his wife, Barbara, moved several times before planting their roots on the Nature Coast—a site they chose because of the year-around mild climate. They enjoy socializing

and watching their grandchildren participate in baseball, soccer, basketball games, and cheerleading. Here, Jim enjoys his favorite game of life, golf. In fact, Windward

Village POA never has morning board meetings; they start around 1:30 or later to allow time for at least 18 holes beforehand.

Jim was a perfect candidate for board president because of his broad experience. He served on the board of directors for Kennedy Mills Home Owners Association and Harker's Hollow Golf and Country Club while living in New Jersey. In addition to serving in managerial roles in the U. S. Marine Corp, he has 30 years of experience as Director of Global Procurement Supplier of AT&T, where he managed an annual budget of more than eight million dollars. Jim has served on the board of the Windward Village Property Owners Association for the past two years.

Windward differs from the other boards he has served on since it is relatively new. "When we first moved here, there were many resident-run events including cookouts, 4th of July celebrations, and an Italian Feast held in the parking lot. Today, all community activities are run and managed by the general manager."

The Villages of Citrus Hills and Terra Vista offer two country clubs. Some memberships provide for cross play at both clubs where members may enjoy three golf courses, an activity center, two outdoor pools, a tennis center, and a clubhouse. George reports that the much-anticipated fitness center, currently under construction, will contain an indoor pool, two Racquetball courts and a large exercise area with

separate yoga, aerobics, and spinning rooms, and most importantly, full spa facilities. George says, "Hands down, when you couple our location on the Nature Coast and the abundance of natural recreational options with the country club facilities in Citrus Hills and Terra Vista, there would be no rival country club on the entire Gulf Coast of Florida."

When I asked Jim to elaborate on the challenges of serving as president of Windward Village's board, he said, the growth rate that Terra Vista and Florida as a whole experienced from 2003 to 2006 have made it difficult to maintain the sense of "community." He feels the board's biggest task has been keeping constituents informed. This is the second year of board operation. "The first year, 2006, was a learning experience for us; everything was new, [and] we had just assumed control from the developer." Jim continues, "Now we're finding ways to communicate the things we learned in our first year." Jim maintains a website which has proven to be an effective communication tool. Here, residents and builders can find links to board and committee members, announcements, minutes of board meetings, and frequently asked questions and the community's documents. To visit their site, go to [www.windwardvillage.org](http://www.windwardvillage.org). Jim states, however, "There is no substitute for open, two-way communication." This writer says, "Hear, hear!"

With the amenities of Terra Vista at Citrus Hills, and the variety and abundance of wildlife Citrus County has to offer, there is no better retirement destination for those who appreciate nature and who want to enjoy a vibrant, active lifestyle. On the Nature Coast, everyone can find something that pleases them.

Current residents, Bill and Karen Riske, researched their options for early retirement and visited the Carolinas, Georgia, Texas, Arizona, and Nevada. "We read about a seminar being held to introduce Citrus Hills as a place to relax and enjoy retirement and, although we hadn't considered Florida as one of our options, we thought it wouldn't hurt to see what they were offering," Bill says. It was mid-winter in Michigan and an offer of a free three day/two night stay in warm, sunny Florida sounded like a great idea. Timing is everything. Bill and Karen had vacationed in Florida several times with their children; they had visited Naples, the Keys, Marco Island, and Ft. Lauderdale, but had never been to north-central Florida. "We just couldn't believe it—the hills and rolling countryside. All the forest greenery and natural beauty! We just fell in love," Bill exclaims. Their search was over.

"Citrus Hills Development showed us around. They took us to Clearview Estates, Greenbriar, [and] Canterbury Estates and, although we knew we wanted to live in Citrus Hills, we hadn't made up our mind when they mentioned a new section called Terra Vista. Fenway was the only street in the section at that time and Ted Williams was one of the few residents," Bill states. I asked if they selected Windward because they were baseball fans. He said no, it was the great climate and hilly countryside that sold them. They purchased a lot on Fenway Drive in 2000 before returning to Michigan. He and Karen built their home two years later, and settled in to enjoy early retirement. Both take pleasure in playing tennis several times a week and Bill enjoys golf. "There are so many things



to do here," he says. "I love classic cars. We have a 1951 custom Mercury and 1956 T-bird that Karen and I love to drive around the countryside. We also have an airboat and like to take scenic cruises down the Withlacoochee River or, when we feel like fishing, we go to the Gulf."

For fishermen, the Nature Coast offers a vast selection of opportunities. You can catch a sunshine bass in the Lake Tsala Apopka chain or a speckled perch in Lake Rousseau. The Withlacoochee River has abundant catfish; the most sought after largemouth bass can be found in almost any of the area's fresh waterways. If you prefer the taste of a saltwater bounty, Crystal River or the Homosassa River offer direct routes to the Gulf of Mexico. The Gulf's prized delicacies of grouper, snapper, and redfish can be found around the reefs, and cobia and sheepshead lurk near the channel markers.

If fishing isn't your game, the country club life of Citrus Hills offers two distinct clubs with three golf courses, two tennis centers, nature trails, an activity center, and, later this fall, a first-class spa and fitness center. Terra Vista Country Club's executive staff includes a Club Manager, Golf Director, Tennis Director, Membership Director, Social Director and a Food and Beverage Manager. Citrus Hills Construction currently offers eighteen home models; four of them are larger than 4,000 square feet, with current prices ranging from the mid-300's to over a million. Jim adds to this by commenting, "The vision of a middle-income retirement community is trending to an upscale resort atmosphere." That is proof that Gerry and Sam's original vision produced a larger bounty than they had ever imagined.

Jim says his job as board president is most pleasurable because of the great team he has to work with. Bill Riske, former board president, is the current vice president. Architectural control board chair, Sharon Beckwith, and her committee have done an outstanding job laying out the foundation for our ACB guidelines. The financial skills and support of Darrell Wolski, board treasurer, make his job easier and Jim never has to worry about paper work with Sol Asekun as board secretary. He says that this team, with the guidance of a great community association manager, has accomplished a great deal.

Sharon shared her learning experiences, "...in the beginning we had to establish processes and procedures to receive, record, track, follow up, and process requests from homeowners; they were constantly being tweaked, but now that we are in our second year, everything runs smoothly." As a retired Information Technology Project Support Manager for NASA, Sharon feels communication is the key to success, "The website developed by our current president is a major benefit in communicating with the majority of residents. Our ACB guidelines are posted there," she adds.

We have touched on golfing, tennis, boating, fishing, and the social life of Windward Village. We've covered the original baseball theme of the development and noted that the great Ted Williams lived in the community until the



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time of his death in July of 2002. But, is that all there is? No indeed, according to property owner, Marjorie Benjamin.

Marjorie and her husband moved to Citrus Hills from England in 2000. They purchased one of the first homes on Mickey Mantle Path. She says what she most likes about living in Windward Village and what she feels makes it unique are the mix of people who live there and the social events that she so enjoys. "I really like the Trivial Pursuit parties they have every month or so and the dinner dances put on by the Citrus Hills Women's Club." She says she enjoys the nature trails in Terra Vista and can't wait for the fitness center to be completed. She continues, "I enjoy being active, walking or riding a bike through the hills in such a beautiful environment; I just love living here."

Biking is another great way to see the variety of natural wonders along Florida's Nature Coast. The rolling hills of the Central Ridge and Citrus Hills provide a challenging bike ride for cross-country cyclists. Another popular cycling route is the Withlacoochee State Trail. Formerly a railroad line, the trail is 47 paved miles of gentle sloping grades. It runs the entire length of Citrus County. According to the Citrus County Chronicle, the trail serves as a habitat for gopher tortoises, and one may encounter sand hill cranes, bobcats, feral hogs, river otters, alligators,

turkey, deer, squirrels, and rabbits. It is also an ideal place for wild-flowers year around. Bike rental is available in the nearby downtown Inverness area.

Other Nature Coast wonders are two crystal clear springs in Citrus County where the water temperature is a constant 72 degrees year around. When the Gulf temperature cools, manatees navigate into the warm springs to spend their winters in moderate temperatures, year after year. Several local guides provide "swim with the manatees" excursions where you can experience the docile creatures up close and personal.

Terra Vista of Citrus Hills is set among gentle rolling hills in the heart of Citrus County along Florida's Nature Coast. This community is a northern suburb of Tampa Bay. It offers all the amenities anyone could dream of for a vibrant lifestyle. Central Florida's theme parks are less than an hour and a half drive from Citrus County. The temperate year-round weather, idyllic natural beauty, superb golf, tennis, boating and fishing all combine with a rare spirit of community to create an enchanting place to live.

I'd like to acknowledge Forest Ridge Village and the Citrus Hills Social Club whose directories were used for the historical information used to write this article and to the Nature Coast Chamber of Commerce for providing other local details. For more information on Florida's Nature Coast, Citrus County visit, [www.citruscountychamber.com](http://www.citruscountychamber.com) and click on "Good Life."

*If you'd like to learn more about Terra Vista at Citrus Hills, visit [www.citrushills.com](http://www.citrushills.com).* ■

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