

Paradise

News Magazine of the South Beaches since 1995

News

VOL. 22 NO. 3 • MARCH 2016



Uncover the story of how
the family of Albright Landscaping
have beautified Tampa Bay area homes for 40 years



COVER STORY

Home by Home, Generation to Generation: The History of Albright Landscaping

by Melanie Albright

The year was 1976. My dad, Dan Albright, was a mere fourteen years old.

He had an eagle eye for detail, a strong work ethic and a crazy idea: he would veer off the traditional route of skating through school because that was what he was supposed to do. Instead he would do more: he would do what he needed to do. Specifically, he would take his destiny into his own hands, dedicate his life to his work and transform dead spaces into venues where the moments we live for take place.

He started with clean-ups and cutting grass. Before long, he found his love of working with plants, extending his clients' homes right into the outdoors, designing tropical paradises and country living spaces alike. Drawn in by the endless possibilities, he let go of maintenance and focused on landscape design and installation full-time.

Those early days did not come without challenges. One dilemma of the budding business owner was that he was too young to have a driver's license, yet running trucks was as essential to Albright Landscaping then as it is now. Luckily, his older sister, my aunt Toni, was able to help him in this area. She took the wheel while he navigated from job to job.

Although Toni was accepting of my dad's direction, I imagine that his team were reserved, if not outright skeptical, about such a young lad being their boss. He was able to earn their respect, however, by leading with a hard work ethic, ready to get his hands dirty working alongside and teaching

them, while at the same time not shying away from what he didn't know (or feigning knowledge that he hadn't acquired yet). He didn't hesitate at a chance to learn from those around him, frequenting local nurseries to discover more.

As a result, by the time he was 16, my dad had five trucks and eight employees, all of whom were older than he was. Whether the jobs were big or small, the impact of the outcome was and has always been constant. Most memorable for my dad over the last forty years is his customers' astonishment with how quickly Albright Landscaping are able to bring dramatic, quality results: "It is always a joy to see their reactions after having just come home from work to see that their yard has completely transformed from whatever they left us with that morning," he explains, before continuing that "They'll call or text [him] months after [their job's completion] just to let [him] know how much they're enjoying their new landscaping, or that they've just had a beautiful wedding or party and all of their guests loved the work we did. That is the most satisfying thing."

Those early impressions of high-quality, timely transformations caused the business' reputation to rise at a steady incline, with my dad building working relationships that still exist today. "I've worked with some of my clients the entire forty years," he reveals.

However, it was not only his growing clientele that he has made lasting connections with, but also other locally run businesses. Building relationships with our suppliers is such an important component of the business, enabling us to know exactly where to obtain the best products for our clients while ensuring that we are able to secure them as well. That is a privilege that can only come with time and trust.

Towards the end of 1984, as my dad settled in to make his mark on the landscaping industry on his own, everything changed forever: he met a woman named Lisa Morrill. Two weeks later, they were married.

My mom was the perfect complement to my dad, both in business and in life. She kept him grounded while supporting his vision for Albright Landscaping. Although she didn't balk at hard labor, often finding herself shovel-in-hand, her expertise shone through most brightly in the office. That is where her impact was the most prominent, adding structure to the framework that my dad had been putting in place over the last seven years.

As they worked together, the business began to grow more rapidly and along with it, so did the family, first with the dramatic entrance of my eldest brother Danny in 1985, on the very day that Hurricane Elena formed. With their newly born baby boy, my parents were discharged from the hospital early once the mandatory evacuation notice had been issued to the Tampa Bay area. They were forced to seek shelter across the Howard Frankland Bridge as sinister waves threatened their grip on the road. Days later, Danny found himself on his first job while my dad helped restore the homes that had been affected, whether by fallen trees or debris-torn landscapes.

Less theatrical introductions came two and four years later with Matthew and, finally, me. Somehow the addition of three children so close in age actually concentrated our parents' focus: my dad describes this period of time as one when he and my mom really knew where they wanted to take Albright Landscaping—and, as it has turned out, we would be right there with them, every step of the way.

Our training began early. My parents often took us to Busch Gardens and other amusement parks when we



were growing up. My dad would teach us the names of each passing plant as he and my mom were inspired by the surrounding landscapes. By the time we were five years old, we were hard-pressed to find a plant of which we didn't know the name.

Landscaping, and specifically Albright Landscaping, was a central part of our family since its conception. Moreover, it was a key part of our upbringing. My brothers' version of strong men (read "boys") competitions ranged from hopping in the back of my dad's pickup truck and unloading three-gallon plants as quickly as they could to swiping his shovels and finding out who could be the first to dig a hole big enough for a palm tree's root ball. During this time, we also propagated and grew 20,000 plants per year, right in our small backyard. As Albright Landscaping grew, indeed, so did we, along with the roles we played in its success.

I managed to escape the Florida heat by following my mom's footsteps into the office. She was excellent at her job: answering the phones in a welcoming tone, managing the numbers with ease, smoothly making sense of what could be a chaotic job schedule. Her efforts behind the scenes made it



possible for Albright Landscaping to live up to its reputation of timely, quality work despite its large size and the great number of projects coming in at the time. There was no better teacher from whom to learn not only what to do and how to do it, but also how to do it better, proactively and while putting your heart into every step.

Likewise, my brothers had the best teacher to learn their trade from, specifically how to design quality landscapes while managing the intricacies



to identify areas of improvement and tools that will optimize our clients' experience. In getting to work with our parents, my brothers and I became privy to the expert knowledge that they had been honing since before we were born. We were able to understand key factors that help make a business successful, a lesson that takes many people years



of trial and error to learn. What's more is that we were entrusted with applying those lessons directly to the business, responsible for our progression and impact, whether bad or good.

Finally, and perhaps what I am most grateful for, is that we were able to contribute to the success of our family's business, applying our own passions and letting them flourish.

My dad is a firm believer that passion is the primary factor that drives us, Albright Landscaping the business and the family, forward. While the quality and efficiency of our work are of course vital, the love for what we do is what sets us apart. "We spend our time between jobs doing our own landscape projects, making our backyard better," he points out. Albright Landscaping specializes in residential outdoor space transformations because the family behind the business believe that yards are extensions of homes.



involved with bringing those designs to life in record time. Attributing his work ethic to his own father, passing on the knowledge of what it takes to keep the family business progressing has always been important to my dad, even if we didn't end up applying it to the continuation of Albright Landscaping itself. However, it is not just the skill that he was able to instill, but also the passion for our work.

It did not take long for Matthew to become a crew leader with a keen drive

The strong work ethic, dedication and passion that are at the root of Albright Landscaping have proven to be the main ingredients in a recipe for lasting success. Furthermore, they are all qualities that still show in my dad, forty years later, as he tries to take on a more advisory role.

Keeping him from doing so is that what drew him into landscaping at the start continues to reward him today: his clients' reactions to Albright

Landscaping's ability to realize the possibilities. Our clients often text me over the weekend to tell me how much they're enjoying their new backyards, just to let me know how thankful they are of the work we did for them. That is rewarding. That is what makes us love doing what we do, our clients' appreciation for it," my dad reflects, before concluding that "There really is nothing like a satisfied customer."

Through our ability to envision and bring to life the possibilities, my family, including our team, who my dad often introduces as his "adopted sons"—have created spaces that enable the necessary day-to-day unwinding as well as backdrops of life events, from birthday parties to weddings and beyond. We feel that doing so allows our family to improve the quality of life of so many families around the Tampa Bay area.

Celebrating our 40-year anniversary and considering the components that have been constant throughout our time, we are reminded of the transitions that we have undergone as well as the challenges that we have overcome. Most recently, the matriarch of the company and the heart of our family passed away far too soon at just 51 years old. Words fall short in describing with justice the impact that my mom had on us. Our aim is to continue to live and work with the passion that she did, feeling that this is the best way to honor her.

We open this new chapter with my dad divulging the management ins-and-outs to Matthew, who plans on continuing the quality work that Albright Landscaping has been known for over the last four decades. "Our size today allows us to be more personal with and attentive to our clients. With my 11 years' worth of experience, not to mention being trained under my dad's 40 years, I want to make sure that every one of our jobs is done to the highest level of quality." And so, our family business enters the second generation. We look forward to getting to work with you over the next 40. PN

albright
Landscaping, Inc
(727) 526-8835