

A Tribute to John M. Golden  
Chief Ranger  
UNF Wildlife Sanctuary  
1984—2003



"We change the planet one person at a time"

# *John Michael Golden*

*February 25, 1951-March 15, 2003*

John M. Golden, UNF's chief nature trail ranger for nearly 20 years, was born in Brooklyn, NY, and grew up in New York City. Family say even as a young child, John loved to be outdoors and often would disappear for hours in the nearby woods when visiting relatives outside the City.

After completing a B.A. in English at Wagner College in Staten Island, NY in 1972, he headed out West. There he continued his undergraduate studies in biology, education, psychology and linguistics at Arizona State and worked as an EMT.

It was in Seattle in the mid-'80s that he met wife-to-be Cathy E. Clark. Cathy's job opportunity brought them to Jacksonville and John to the UNF campus in 1984. He volunteered on the trails for a month, then was hired by UNF Campus Recreation Director Becky Purser.

Calling himself an "environmental moderate," John partnered with University faculty, staff, students and administrators. There were many strategy sessions on John's back porch with the ever-present National Public Radio in the background. His drive and vision eventually transformed the trails from a campus recreational opportunity, into an environmental education resource for thousands of school children, college students, and the Northeast Florida community. In the '90s he simultaneously worked at UNF and as a seasonal park ranger with the National Park Service at Jacksonville's Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve at Fort Caroline.

Always seeking and sharing knowledge, he became a Certified Naturalist Interpreter in 1998. He designed, implemented and taught one of the first Eco-Tourism/Heritage Tourism Providers credentialing programs in the First Coast area in '99-2000. The 40 hour course used UNF faculty and staff to teach providers environmental ethics, Nature Based Assets, Cultural Assets, Pedagogy and other issues that would enable them to provide quality programming in environmentally responsible ways.

The next year he was awarded the EPA's Wild Neighborhoods Grant, which made it possible for 850 area low income school children to participate in ranger guided environmental programs at UNF and at Talbot Island State Park where, for some, the ocean became a reality for the first time.

He was appointed as the Audubon Natural Resource Manager with responsibility for assuring that UNF's golf facility would be as carefully managed as possible from an environmental perspective, with native plantings and a respect for habitat. During the same period, he created and implemented the first "Eco Camp" for children ages 8-12 years, centering on environmental initiatives while integrating math and science curriculum.

In Summer 2001, John and his student-staff proudly occupied office space suitable for their programs needs in the Hayt Golf Learning Center. John was particularly pleased when the administration also dedicated other space in the Center to labs for faculty environmental research.

Then, just as he had reached his stride, John was diagnosed with lung cancer in Fall 2001. He fought the "alien", as he called it, in his body with the same tenacity that he had approached most obstructions in his life: head on. His once-booming voice reduced to a whisper, Chief John persevered, in spite of the severe physical discomfort and reduced mobility caused by his treatment. And even in his final months, he continued to amuse us with a sense of humor and a language all his own, such as calling his dedicated student-coworkers "pups".

His hard work and commitment also leave a legacy that those who loved him and believed in him must ensure will continue. To borrow John's environmental vocabulary, we hope his work and his memory are "sustainable."

## Order of Tribute

*Welcome*.....*Dr. Mauricio Gonzalez*  
*Vice President Student Affairs*

*Spiritual Offering*.....*Aileen Miller*

*Tributes*.....

*Dr. David Fenner*  
*Associate Professor Philosophy*

*Dr. John Eisler*  
*Associate Professor Psychology*

*Dr. Ray Bowman*  
*Professor, Chemistry and Physics*

*Mr. Dan Tardona*  
*National Park Service, Timicuan Preserve*

*Mr. Craig Morris*  
*National Park Service*

*Dr. Johnny Randall*  
*Conservation Biologist, UNC—Chapel Hill*

*Memorial Announcements*.....

*Mr. Hank Rogers*  
*President, Student Government*  
*John M. Golden Scholarship*

*Mr. Rod Grabowski*  
*Institutional Advancement*  
*John M. Golden Environmental Education Pavilion*  
*Native Garden*

*Closing*.....*Mr. Everett J. Malcolm, III*  
*Associate Vice President Student Affairs*

*Contributions may be made to the John M. Golden Environmental Education Pavilion and are greatly appreciated by Cathy Clark and the Clark and Golden families.*



"In 20 years UNF will be a green island surrounded by a sea of development."

John M. Golden, 1985

Chief Ranger—UNF Wildlife Sanctuary



Top Five Things I Learned While Working With Ranger John

1. Hand trucks and old tires are fairly safe objects to play with
2. Snakes (especially ones with musk glands), snapping turtles and the golf coach are best left alone.
3. One of the best ways to learn something is to jump right in (or get pushed in, whichever comes first)
4. Overcoming the fear of public speaking at Earth Music Fest is only a few beers away...oh, sorry, I meant it's all about practice and being well prepared
5. Work should be more than a job, and colleagues should be more than just people you work with

- Ranger Martian (a.k.a. Marcia Kintner)