

Architect Earns Fran Barford Award

By JOYCE MCKENZIE, The Tampa Tribune

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TEMPLE TERRACE - When Don and Doris Rimbey moved their family of seven children to Temple Terrace in 1967, their youngest son, Grant, was 4 years old. It didn't take him long, though, to acclimate to the new surroundings in a city he quickly embraced.

Although Rimbey's passion for the city would wane during his young adulthood, he has established himself in recent years as one of the city's staunchest supporters. That commitment was recognized last week when the now-44-year-old architect and planner was awarded the Fran Barford Public Service Award by the Temple Terrace Woman's Club.

'I had so many great times in Temple Terrace growing up as a boy - fishing on the banks of the Hillsborough River, playing near the Bat Tower, chasing fireflies and dragonflies on the golf course and admiring the sublime old 1920s architecture,' Rimbey said.

Following a four-year absence from his boyhood home that included a year's study in Vicenza, Italy, while earning his bachelor's degree in architecture from the University of Florida, he realized his love for the city he had cherished as a child had greatly faded.

'I couldn't wait to leave and go to graduate school at the University of Texas in Austin, Texas,' Rimbey said. 'I remember being tired of all the small-town politics of Temple Terrace, and the place seemed suffocating and dinky to me.'

What he found striking was that although the two cities were similar in climate and landscape, Austin's residents seemed much more involved in civic matters and appeared to have a much greater sense of pride in their community.

'It was eye-popping to learn about civic activism, green building, smart growth, New Urbanism, human environments and the natural environments existing in equilibrium side by side and the politics of the Texas populist, which basically say that the citizens are in control and anything good starts from the grass roots up,' Rimbey said.

'Lighting Some Fire'

When he decided to move back to Temple Terrace in 2001 after a 10-year stay in the Lone Star State, he made it his mission to lead the way in 'lighting some fire under the feet' of his fellow residents to help revitalize the city he saw as in need of rejuvenation.

Rimbey soon founded and became president of the Citizens for the Revitalization of Temple Terrace, a residents-driven activist group dedicated to sprucing up the city. In addition, he joined the Temple Terrace Preservation Society, for which he is the immediate past president and was instrumental in its obtaining a state grant to fund a historic resources study aimed at qualifying city properties for listings in the National Register of Historic Places.

In conjunction with his brother, Brad, he developed a partnership this year between the city of Temple Terrace and the Temple Terrace Golf & Country Club to interest other residents and civic groups in donating money to plant additional trees on the cherished course. Rimbey also initiated a \$3,000 tree-planting project

with Esurance Inc. and the Tampa Reforestation and Environmental Effort, through which they donated 30 longleaf pines to the city-owned Biltmore Park and Broadway Outfall.

Also, earlier this year, in an effort to eventually rebuild the city's historical Bat Tower, which was destroyed by arsonists in 1979, he helped reintroduce a bat roost program in which an anonymous donor contributed \$1,000 to purchase nine bat roosts to entice the flying mammals back to Temple Terrace. Temple Terrace Parks and Recreation Department planner Dana Carver assisted in the project, one he and Rimbey hope is the precursor to a restored tower that would be one of just four in the world.

Rimbey, married to Susan and the father of sons Pierce, 7, and Addison, 3, also is secretary of the Friends of the Temple Terrace Parks and Recreation Department and vice president of the Redevelopment Task Force, a group of residents that is helping to steer the city toward its goal of creating a mixed-use, medium-density New Urbanism-styled downtown southeast of the Bullard Parkway/North 56th Street intersection.

Value Of Community Service

'Temple Terrace deserves our best fight to ensure that it has a viable future,' said Rimbey, who often credits his childhood neighbor Frank Moses, who is now deceased, for instilling in him the value of community service. 'Frank had a real love and passion for this city and would do anything for it.'

The judges for this year's Fran Barford Public Service Award perceive Rimbey in the same way he viewed Moses. During May 23's end-of-the-year luncheon and installation of officers, the organization honored him as the third recipient of an award meant to pay homage to its treasured club member who served as Temple Terrace's first female mayor from 1998 to 2004.

Barford, who now lives on Anna Maria Island and is its city's mayor, was on hand to present the award.

'I've known Grant since he was a child. He helped my husband put together bikes and other technical-type toys at Christmastime so George didn't have to do it on Christmas Eve,' Barford said. 'Although I had nothing to do with the selection, I think he's a good choice. He's very passionate about his community.'

Rimbey's father said his son's older siblings set good examples for him.

'I feel he is very deserving,' Don Rimbey said. 'When he gets involved, especially in doing things that benefit our town, he gives 110 percent.'

His mother also expressed her pride in her son.

'We've known Fran for many years, and she's quite a lady. That in itself makes this award special,' Doris Rimbey said.