

I finally caught up with Mother Nature down at the Vernal Equinox Cafe the other day. She was sipping a cappuccino and watching the Weather Channel on the TV over the bar.

I couldn't tell by her expression if she was pleased or disturbed over her handiwork as the radar images and weather maps flashed across the screen.

I pulled up a stool next to her, motioning to the bartender that I would

have whatever she was drinking. Without taking her eyes off the TV, she said rather coolly, "You Florida boys have had a mild winter haven't you?"

"Well, yes!" I said, "And we all thank you from the bottom of our budgets."

"Don't be too quick to thank me," she said, "I don't know what happened to the jet stream this winter. Sometimes it's tricky to handle, even for me! I had planned for some of that Georgia and North Carolina ice and snow to dip down and get rid of some of your insect problems even if I had to scare the bejeebers out of the citrus growers in Sebring."

I sensed she wasn't in the best of moods, but I had some questions I needed to ask.

Tom Benefield knew that I had met Mother Nature before and he wanted me to get an interview with her to find out what we could expect during this year's transition. I took a deep breath and began, "We were wondering if you have

something planned for this spring that we should know about?"

Ignoring the question, she turned slowly towards me. I couldn't be sure, but I thought I saw a hint of a smile.

"How did you like those record high temperatures in February?"

She was baiting me. I thought about the overseeding we had lost prematurely to the heat.

I tried to remain composed as I answered, "Nothing you do surprises us anymore!"

"Oh really!" Her eyebrows arched and her eyelids closed down to mere slits as she spoke. "That almost sounds like a challenge!"

I knew I was in deep Milorganite. Headlines about killer ice storms that devastate Florida on April Fool's Day flashed before my eyes. I tried to retreat gracefully.

"We would never think of challenging you. In fact, we try to work with you as best we can to keep our courses playable through transition. Sometimes your — ah — how shall I say — 'surprises' can be devastating to our programs."

"Surprises!" she exploded. "You call my March heat waves and April frosts surprises! I've been doing that stuff for centuries! Don't you read the weather records?"

"Haven't you people learned how to cope, yet?"

"I can't be concerned with your precious transition programs and spring tournaments. Don't you understand the immense pressure I'm under from the Chamber of Commerce to produce

*Continued on Page 86*

## An Interview with Mother Nature

### Green Side Up



*Joel D. Jackson*

Joel Jackson, CGCS

## Jarrell: We'd better acknowledge our image

evidence linking these cancers to pesticide exposure are inconclusive.

Large intestine and prostate cancer mortality rates were also higher than the general population of white males.

All these statistics really mean is that further research is warranted, which is exactly what is going to happen in the second phase of this study. Information may be developed which proves conclusively that pesticide exposure contributed to the early deaths of some superintendents in the past and, perhaps, some useful safety precautions will be recommended for those of us using pesticides today.

And maybe not... which brings me to the point of this article: the golf industry had better wake up and acknowledge the fact that 90% of the population of the U.S. does not play golf, and that golf is perceived as elitist, non-essential, polluting, resource-wasting despoiler of the environment by a large percentage of non-golfers.

Things will never change until our positive environmental message is taken to the mainstream media. We need to quit preaching to the choir.

Within one day of release of the preliminary report on the GCSAA mortality study, syndicated radio moron Paul Harvey "reported" that "not only are golf course pesticides killing the birds, but they're killing golf course superintendents also."

You may recall that about a year ago, Mr. Harvey was taken to task by GCSAA and individuals for his broadcast claiming that golf course pesticides were responsible for the lack of songbirds at his home course, so this latest invective is obviously an immature reprisal.

Mr. Harvey's irresponsibility is especially disheartening because he is a golfer, but he is far from alone in his unfounded attacks on golf courses and their maintenance practices. FGCSA director Mike Mongoven recently faxed me an anti-golf diatribe from the Gannett News Service detailing "the hazards of golf," and golf architect Jan Beljan has collected dozens of similar articles from various sources over the past couple of years.

We think we are doing a good job of educating people to golf's positive environmental impact, but we are living in a very insulated world.

When I write an article for *Golfweek*, maybe 40,000 or 50,000 golfers will see it. An article like this in the *Florida Green* may be read by 4,000 or 5,000 - all in the golf industry - depending on how often our 3,000 copies get passed around.

An idiot like Paul Harvey is probably heard by hundreds of thousands, if not millions, and Gannett News Service stories are definitely read by millions.

Vice President Al Gore and EPA Director Carol Browner are still lacing up their boots, but I fear a heavy footprint will yet be tread upon the golf industry by these two before they leave office.

Our message needs to be heard by the general public.

How this is best accomplished, I haven't a clue. Perhaps the GCSAA, the USGA, the NGF, and all local golf and turfgrass associations need to pool resources to buy space in *USA Today* or other national newspapers, or even television time, to extol the valuable environmental contributions of turfgrass and golf courses.

Something needs to be done to reverse our negative image before it's too late.

## Jackson: Interview with Mother Nature

*Continued from Page 88*

pleasing average temperatures for the tourism brochures? Listen Boobie, to get averages I have to create many highs and lows, and that goes for temperature, humidity, and rainfall."

Everybody in the cafe was staring at us. I could feel my neck and my ear lobes getting hot. I knew I wasn't going to win this argument. I counted slowly to 10 on an imaginary Stimpmeter to cool off before I spoke.

"Listen MN, we know you make the rules and you can break or bend them at will. Unfortunately, our bosses and our customers want us to follow a predetermined set of rules so they can sell a per-

fectly conditioned golf course 365 days a year.

"They don't understand your position half as well as we do, and you keep us guessing plenty. Although we hope for moderation on your part, we definitely pray for patience on their part when you challenge us with your unexpected highs and lows during transition."

Putting on my most sympathetic expression, I asked, "Have you ever considered taking lithium during the spring?"

She transfixed me with a laser stare that I knew was guiding a lightning bolt at my heart. Then she leaned back in her seat and laughed, "Lithium! Valium! Snapple! Jack Daniels! I've tried them all. Nothing really works me like seeing you guys scrambling around trying to hang in

there after I've gone crazy."

She put her hand on my arm and squeezed gently as she whispered in my ear, "Don't worry so much. You guys do a pretty good job of catching what I throw at you. I'm not making any promises mind you. I do have my responsibilities; but I will try to get the message across to your golfers."

The interview was over. She gathered up her belongings, slid off the stool, and headed for the door.

Halfway to the entrance she stopped, looked over her shoulder at me, winked and said, "You might want to cancel that verticutting you had planned for next week. There's a cold front coming out of Canada that's not on the maps yet and it's going to be a real stinker!"