"Driving the Green" fascinating for all readers

By Peter Blais

It's hard to imagine writing a book about building a golf course anyone other than a builder, architect or superintendently interesting.

But much to his credit, in "Driving the Green: The Making of a Golf Course," John Strawn has created a 344-page work that should entertain even those who have never picked up a golf club.

"Driving the Green" is the story of Ironhorse Golf Course in Palm Beach County, Fla. It details the legal, financial and permitting obstacles that had to be overcome and the twice-as-long-as-expected, four-year process of building the course — problems most developers are all too familiar with.

While details of putting together the deal, designing the course and moving dirt are interesting in their own right, it is Strawn's portrayal of the personalities behind Ironhorse that keeps the story moving.

One of the most intriguing characters is Alan Sher, the millionaire button manufacturer who took an option on the 354-acre former horse-racing property. Sher envisioned a maximum of 200 luxury homes surrounded by a beautiful golf course where he and his friends could tee up within a couple of years.

But Sher soon discovered building a course was not as easy as it appeared. He spent $40,000 just to find there was no right-of-way into his property. There was the Bird Lady, Rosa Durando, a transplanted New Yorker who slowed Ironhorse's progress by eating into his declining fortune.

Hills, the busiest architect in the United States according to Golf Digest, is portrayed as a man who loves to please clients, but also possesses with "an obsession to achieve." Yet pleasing Sher, who "treated Hills as if he were the royal course designer," was easier than pleasing the bottom line-oriented Muss. The dual desires to please and achieve conflicted late in the building process.

Tempters flared when Hills wanted to fill in an already-constructed bunker he considered unnecessary. Jon Harpman, Muss' nephew and his uncle's assistant at the job site, refused to fill in a bunker that already had sand and drainage.

The normally soft-spoken Hills exploded, offering, in very colorful language, to pay for removing it himself. Later, Muss firmly told Hills not to castigate his nephew for his uncle's decision. Hills apologized to Harpman.

"Hell, I thought I'd bust out laughing," said shaper Willie Owsley, the artist with the bulldozer who finally removed the bunker he had earlier created. Owsley learned his craft from a retired shaper who went to jail after trying to use his pension to finance a cocaine deal.

"I learned from the best," Owsley said of his mentor. "He could shape swales that would make water think."

People like Owsley, Hills, Muss, Sher and the rest of the Ironhorse line-up that makes "Driving the Green" an enjoyable read between rounds.

Strawn grew up in southern Illinois and lives in Portland, Ore. He taught history at Reed College, then spent a decade in the construction business.

This is his first book. It costs $25 and is published by HarperCollins Publishers in New York.
THE ABSOLUTE SOLUTION
Complete Finish Services For New Golf Course Irrigation Systems
- New Construction Start-ups & Repairs
- Controller Wiring & Programming
- Troubleshooting & Testing
- Personnel Training
- Computer & Radio-Controlled Systems Installed
- Serving Mid to South Atlantic States

ABSOLUTE IRRIGATION SYSTEMS, INC.
Contact Charlie Moretti, President
Tel: 908-526-4998 Fax: 908-526-8378
P.O.Box 6723, Bridgewater, NJ 08807

CIRCLE #155

Sod Stripper™ cuts a strip of sod for your small turf repairs.
Call for Brochure 800-456-4351

CIRCLE #159

Modular Golf Course Markers
- OUT-OF-BOUNDS MARKERS
- VARDAGE MARKERS
- GROUND UNDER REPAIR MARKERS
- TEE MARKERS
- HAZARD MARKERS

UNBEATABLE PRICES!
For more information call Toll Free
1-800-969-5920

CIRCLE #156

THE FLOYD-MCKAY DEEP DRILL AERIFIER
The Floyd-McKay concept utilizes drill bits rather than tines which provides the following superior results...
- Penetrates hard pan
- No compaction
- Increases root depth
- Allows better percolation
- Drills up to 10”
- Playable same day

Maximum Results, Minimal Disturbance
GREAT GREENS OF AMERICA
(800) 835-6080

Sales & contract service available.

CIRCLE #157

CIRCLE #158

willadsen scale models
Custom Models for the Golf Industry
555 whitehall street s.w.
natlanta, ga. 30303 (404) 658-1704

MOWER MATE®
U.S. & Foreign Patents Pending. Canadian Pat. #66639
Protect your greensmower from damage due to transport from green to green. Our exclusive 3-point clamping system suspends your reel, bed-knife, verticutter & differential. Call or write for details.

BELL TURF EQUIPMENT
316 blossom hill rd.
San Jose, CA 95123
(408) 972-5961

CIRCLE #160

Lube Cube Inc. has released new product literature on its above-ground storage tanks. Included is information on Lube Cube single- and double-walled tanks; Fuel Cube for fuel storage; Waste-Evac for storing and transferring used products for recycling; and the Lube Cube Hallmark Tank Vault featuring six inches of concrete between two steel tanks with a two-hour firewall rating.

To receive this literature or additional information on Lube Cube products call 800-777-2823 or write Lube Cube, P.O. Box 396, Severna Park, Md. 21146.

RegalFate™
THE FATAL ATTRACTION FOR INSECTS!
Now landscape managers can provide a service urgently needed by homeowners. As easily as spreading fertilizers, you can control fleas, ticks, ants, spiders and many other pesky insects while they are still outside the home.

RegalFate™ is a granular insecticide. The active ingredient is impregnated on a 100% edible, organic carrier and then baited to attract the insects to eat the toxicant. Ingestion is many times more effective than contact or vapor action of insecticides.

Just spread a 10 foot band of RegalFate™ around the house or building for complete pest control.

Regal Chemical Company
P.O. BOX 900 / ALPHARETTA, GA 30009
PHONE 404-475-4837 / 800-621-5208

CIRCLE #153

CIRCLE #152

CIRCLE #154

CIRCLE #151

Regal Chemical Company
P.O. BOX 900 / ALPHARETTA, GA 30009
PHONE 404-475-4837 / 800-621-5208

CIRCLE #153