Take a kid — anyone's kid — golfing

We're bombarded with all forms of media concerning the trends changing the face of America. But how often do these trends unroll before our very eyes, right in front of our own eyes? Or better yet, how often are we able to play a part in the growth of a trend?

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If you've been a core golfer for the next 50 years. We empathize with those who play in excess of 25 rounds a year.

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By JIM APPLEGATE

GUEST COMMENTARY

Confusion by design?

We sincerely empathize with those who are about to embark on a golf course project today. Whether that project entails a renovation, a redesign or a completely new design and construction. We empathize because, perhaps more than ever before in history, a would-be golf course project

Jim Applegate is president of Signature Course Design

Michael Levans, editor

Will the real environmentalists please take one step forward?

So, the World According to Dodson has arrived: a world where Audubon International's principles of sustainable resource management are not only adhered to but are gospel — flesh of flesh and bone of bone in a development project.

With A.I.'s venture into developing Audubon golf courses, construction and maintenance of golf courses takes a mega-step forward. This goes beyond the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary System Program, which was first off the block signing up existing golf courses in the late 1980s; beyond the Audubon Signature Program, which admitted members as they began construction; and beyond even the Gold Signature Program, which registers members prior to the siting and design of a project.

Think of the significance of this endeavor. AI President Ron Dodson intends to build 100 — that's 1 with not one but two Os it — golf courses site, designed, built and maintained by Audubon's high environmental standards. Thousands of acres of land around the country sitting unused, unwalked-upon, unhiked-upon, unvisited, will be opened up to tens of thousands of golfers now.

This should make environmentalists, birders, ornithologists and snake-lovers happy, right? Wrong. A number of people in the environmental community will be up in arms. And if and when they go public, watch for this Biblical phrase to be fulfilled: "Their skins will be lifted over their heads."

Yes, we will discover who are the true environmentalists. Those who, for their livelihood, try to stop any and every development on earth, will be exposed. "We will catch flak," Dodson acknowledged.

Closely watch the National Audubon Society and Sierra Club, which have consistently bad-mouthed AI and its sister Audubon Society of New York for their involvement with golf courses, resorts, schools and others.

And while you watch, keep in mind that AI promotes reduction in the use of non-renewable resources, creates wildlife habitat, restores degraded environments, pushes golf course superintendents, resort owners and schoolchildren to be aware of the wildlife, flora and fauna around them, and much more.

Then ask National Audubon and Sierra, "What are you for?" Is it too outrageous to say: "If Organization A is against Audubon International golf courses, evidently it is anti-environment?" Congratulations to the true environmentalists: Audubon International, Audubon Society of New York and those scientists and lay persons who work hand-in-hand with them.

... "Uh, Mr. President?"

"Yes, son. I'm about to tee off here, so what do you want?"

"Sir, I, uh, I, um..."

"Speak up, corporal. As a member of our nation's military police, you must learn assertiveness. What is it?"

"Sir, I must ask you to put out your cigar, or, or..."

"Or what?"

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Has so many design firms, design philosophy and design fees to select from. It must be very confusing for even experienced golf developers.

The term "design firm" may be overshadowed and more marketing than reality, in that a golf course designer need not have large corporate headquarters and a large staff to provide professional, quality work. The nature of the business provides that a single golf course designer may consider him or herself a "firm." However, the uninformated golf course developer may be expecting a full support team of civil engineers, land planners and construction services. Best to find out early the depth of the "firm."

We believe that the majority of those working in golf course design are doing so because of their love of golf and because they have developed a technical and artistic skill that deals with the creation of courses for the game. However, the severe competition amongst designers is forcing them to seek individual "niches," which is also creating confusion. Our empathy for those seeking our service stems from this confusion that we see in the design marketplace. Does the owner select a well-known name, a well-known player, an affordable regional designer, a design and build arrangement, a design and management proposal or a hybrid of all of the above? Many other components are often presented as part of a project proposal, which may include golf academies, facility enhancements, tournament production, merchandise packaging, maintenance supervision, consulting and maintenance equipment

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