Golf is pushing toward a greater good

Golf and our society over the last decade have evolved in opposite directions, it seems. The golf industry is an engine driving toward more equality, morality and unity, while society has been steered by politicians and activists toward dissension and immorality.

Ten years ago, Ronald Reagan was president of the United States. The general public felt good about America, its future and its president. The Berlin Wall had fallen and Russia was about to collapse. The U.S. was held in high esteem in most other countries of the world.

In the little world of golf, the industry was peddling along at 200-odd new golf courses each year. Player figures were relatively stagnant. The fiasco over Butler National’s white-only policy had not yet surfaced. Generally, golf was treading water.

Ten years ago this month, Golf Course News published its first issue and I attended my first International Golf Course Conference and Show. I recall my first two interviews:

• with Alice Dye concerning her efforts to get golf course developers and architects to build “forward” tee boxes to make the game more playable for women, youths and older players;

• with golf architect Jeffrey Brauer regarding the pros and cons of sodding an entire course, since Tom Fazio was doing just that for the first time at Shadow Creek Golf Club outside Las Vegas.

They seemed innocent-enough interviews, but look at them more closely. It appears now that Alice’s push (or was she using a high-powered advertising buzzword) was a harbinger of a mammoth, game-changing trend that has turned into an adventure of innovative, energetic programs and learning facilities to pull youths, women and other beginners into the game of golf.

Though sodding golf courses was unheard-of at the time, Brauer’s insights proved true — perhaps even prophetic. The long-term savings related to seeding. But with sodding, a golf course can open quickly and speed up return on investment. Having greatly picked up steam, this method appears to have coincided with the acceptance that, yes, golf can be as much a profitable business as it is a game — a business that can stand without housing, and therefore one that can open to the general public rather than just the wealthy.

Golf as a game, meanwhile, has even gained in stature, perhaps because it stands in stark contrast to the world in which it must exist. Players abide by the rules, everyone being equal. There are no shades of gray. Here’s a novel idea for some of the folks in the White House.

Gamesmanship has to do with a contest of skills, not who can best “spin” the facts, nor who can’t make themselves look good and their enemy evil. Golf’s history is so strongly laced with tales of ethics that they rule — that is, RULE — the game and influence modern players. Compare them to the “ethics” of the world in 1999.

Ten years ago, there existed no Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary System for Golf Courses. Today, thousands of golf courses belong to the system, more are added every month, and builders and architects have labored with environmentalists to forge a set of rules by which they will work with and for ecology. This is a great example of solving a problem.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

On behalf of the entire Renaissance Village team, thank you for the wonderful two articles in your October issue. I must tell you, that of all the coverage we have been fortunate to have had in the past 18 months, you better than anyone the essence of Renaissance Village and what we are trying to do.

To have our labor of love be featured in your industry-leading publication is a real boost to our efforts and our credibility. I wanted you to know your reportage has already generated positive feedback and offers of help from several of your subscribers.

We are eager to keep in touch with you and Golf Course News on the leads you generated as well as subsequent developments surrounding Renaissance Village. We have long recognized that we will not build this project by ourselves, that it will take the combined efforts of literally hundreds of others.

Thank you and your publication for being one of the early believers in this project, and for being one of the early ones among us where we are presently — and further than I ever dreamed. We look forward to sharing with you and your readers the many successes yet to come.

Father Leo
Rev. Leo F. Armbrust
Renaissance Village Inc.