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ONE MORE TIME AT THE SHOW

I was oblivious to the occasional showers everybody else seemed to be grouching about at the Golf Industry Show this year. I had my umbrella.

It would have taken a lot more than unusual weather in San Diego to spoil what was an unexpected and wonderful invitation to attend the GCSAA conference and show. GCI editor Mike Zawacki invited me to go as part of the team. All they asked was for me to help work the booth during trade show hours on Tuesday and Wednesday. Who could turn down such an offer?

Working in the GCI booth was hardly "working." It was more like visiting, something I have done a lot of in my life. Advertisers came by, superintendents stopped and media people in general wanted to talk. Everyone wanted to see Pat Jones. The booth was a beehive of activity.

Although I may have been visiting, the editorial staff was on the go, making the most of the shortened trade show hours. Like superintendents, the chance to see a lot of people in one place in a short period of time is one you cannot pass up. A time or two I was in a panic when I was the only one manning the shop!

The two-day show format seemed to be well received, especially since the show had little or no competition from lectures and seminars or other meetings. It was pretty busy most of the time, pleasing the exhibitors greatly. The narrower aisles and seemingly diminished length of the show area at least gave the impression more people were there despite attendance being down about a thousand attendees from last year's show in New Orleans (down about 6 percent).

I used my free time to attend, for a few minutes at least, seminars and sessions. They were up to the standards of GCSAA education, which the association does very well. It will be interesting to see how many attended the paid seminars; the luncheon crowd was decidedly smaller than in previous years, leading me to conclude there were fewer people in the seminars. I heard great reviews of the Frank Rossi/Roch Gaussoin seminar "Golf Turf PTI," modeled after the ESPN show. These two

veterans put a lot of creativity into this seminar and their audience loved it.

That makes sense since we're certain fewer made the trip to GIS than in recent years. Attendance reflects the tough times golf finds itself in these days. I was proud of my successor at Blackhawk Country Club; he and the assistant were able to stay a full week, take full-day seminars and max out on the experience in every way. They did it for a total for the two of them of \$1,200! They roomed with one and sometimes two colleagues at Humphrey's Half Moon Inn (\$139 each night), rode the shuttle bus, used airline tickets purchased with points from the club's business credit card, and bought groceries for some meals in their room. They had a great and productive conference and show without breaking the bank or having to miss it entirely. It wouldn't suit everyone, but they were unfazed.

I'm a rubbernecker from way back, and I'll admit I missed seeing any real celebrities, especially since Judy Rankin wasn't able to receive her Old Tom Morris award in person. However, Greg Norman made a brief appearance and I was able, through some luck, to get him to autograph my copy of his book "My Story," from 1983 (1st edition). As for the keynote speakers, Chris Gardner's story was fine, but Brian Little's presentation didn't do much for me.

The Celebrate GCSAA event was too long, and I had to leave the day of the Green Section Program – it is usually excellent. I had a great visit with Charlie Tadge and Cliff Wagoner, two venerable past presidents, and our Wisconsin hospitality event was tops, even if the music was too loud. The Tin Fish Restaurant still serves good food at a fair price, and the area around the convention center was still neat, clean, safe and convenient (none of which New Orleans could claim).

All in all, it was an experience just about like it was at all the other shows I have attended – nothing short of terrific.

I hated to leave and head home, but I had some great memories and a new Jacobsen hat to wear for the rest of the winter. **GCI**

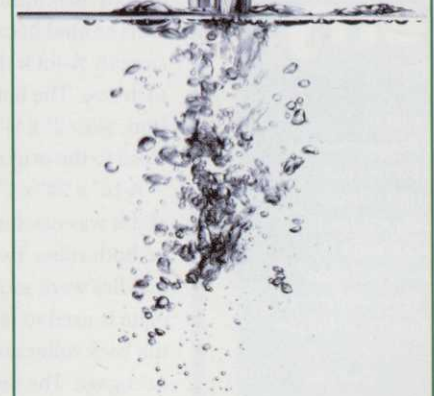
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