

## Networking

As we develop our careers it is increasingly important to manage a set of contacts that become a part of your network. Remember that for job seekers it is often not just what you know but whom you know as well. Taking that a step further it can also be not only whom you know but whom they know as well.

Let's make a list of all the people that can help you in your career. It is not necessary to use names but for this exercise we will use positions to indicate areas to develop contacts.

- Fellow superintendents
- Former employers
- General Managers
- Golf Professionals
- Golf Association staff
- Local distributors
- Manufacturer's representatives
- Educators
- Researchers
- USGA agronomists
- Media
- Golfers
- Neighbors
- Relatives
- Former classmates
- Alumni from your school
- Seminar instructors
- Golf Course Architects
- Consultants
- Headhunters
- Regional Agronomists for Management Companies
- GCSAA staff

make yourself known to others.

- Always be truthful and never embellish your qualifications. Overstating yourself will end up giving you a tag of being dishonest.
- Serious relationships develop over time. They endure because you work at it. Most people have little use for a person that uses you for what they want and then drops you like a hot potato.
- Remember to repay the favor of those that have helped you. Take time to help the newcomers and

youth of the industry. Extend your hand to them and be sincere.

In closing, it is easy to see why networking is so complex. There is a lot to be considered. Nobody grows up with a networking gene in his or her DNA. It is a learned skill. By following some of the tips I have provided you too can get connected. While I have never thought of making new contacts as merely a lead for a job search, I can tell you that it has been the most enjoyable part of my career. I am one of those individuals who truly feels that the most important thing to me, over the last 35 years, is not what I have accomplished but the people that I have met along the way!

## As It Lies Things I Love About Our Game

By Jim Walker



**The subtle clatter** my

irons make as they nuzzle against one another driving down a cart path. Steel-shafted irons make a slightly more metallic sound than

graphite. But either is terrific.

**Watching my father-in-law** knock in a 20-footer for par or birdie. His smile lights up the whole golf course.

**Hitting one** of these new drivers whose head is the size of a two-slice toaster right in the middle of the club face. I didn't think I would ever get used to that sound, but I have.

**Watching my wife** hit a driver flush. Great sound. Beautiful trajectory. Striped, right down the middle.

**Hitting a five-iron** dead solid perfect into a 20-mile-per-hour

wind. The ball never moves one foot right or left.

**Holing a bunker** shot from 40 or 50 feet that would not have gone six inches beyond the hole had it not gone in.

**Rolling in** a slippery downhill snake for all the cookies in a skins game.

**Watching any tour pro** hit driver on a par four or five with a wide landing area. Bombs away!!

**The eight-iron** I holed for eagle on the par five 5th hole when Joe Pantaleo was the superintendent at Eagle Trace. That one cost him a few pesos.

**The two-iron** Joe Pantaleo hit from the left fairway bunker on the fourth hole at Crandon Golf Course (then The Links at Key Biscayne), when he was the superintendent there. That one cost me a few pesos.

**Looking at** any nice golf course under the low light intensity of early morning or late afternoon.

**Watching a row** of heads performing at optimum pressure and gallons per minute. I love the "fog effect" you get looking down the line from the first head to the last.

**A perfect green** stimping 10-plus.

**Standing on the seventh** tee at Pebble Beach, or the seventeenth at the TPC Stadium Course.

**The whispering whir** a reel makes as it spins and kisses the bedknife ever so gently.

**Watching any spinner** top dresser dusting sand on a putting green.

**Bunkers** which are perfectly raked and edged with exactly the correct amount of sand.

**Watching a green** come to life from stripping the sod to fumigation, sprigging, growing in and opening day.

**Going to the West** Coast of Florida for a few days to play golf with my brother-in-law or up to Winter Haven each year to play with our friend Jim "Cornfed" Kosters, a Master PGA Golf Professional who has worn out two sets of Ping Eye Two irons in the 20-odd years I have known him.

**Making a hole in one**, particularly my second which I saw land on the green and go in the hole.

Watching someone else make a hole in one and buying me drinks with a smile on their face.

**New golf equipment.**

Drivers, putters, wedges, irons bags, gloves, balls. Any and all of it.

**Meeting other people**

who really, really, really, love golf.

Mark My Words

## Fuzzy Math Just Doesn't Calculate

By Mark Jarrell, CGCS

From where I'm sitting, the chickens have started coming home to roost on the issue of too many turf schools turning out too many graduates seeking jobs as golf course superintendents. Some may not see it as cause and effect, but here's what I see happening.

I've had several conversations with longtime superintendents who are ready to just pack it in from the demands and pressures of the job – pressures more frequent and intense than they've ever felt before. As a matter of fact,



one friend did just that, last week tossing his keys on the desk and quitting on the spot. Another friend still

reports to work each day, hanging in limbo while his greens committee searches for his replacement.

While the underlying reason may be the sluggish economy, you'll never convince me that dedicated professionals would normally be treated this way if there weren't 500 guys ready to step in and take their place. The spe-

cial camaraderie and cooperation superintendents have always shared with one another may be the next casualty.

Other good evidence, in my opinion, is the length of time a typical graduate spends as an assistant or in other secondary positions before finally getting the chance as a superintendent, if he gets one at all. While I haven't seen statistics, it seems that graduates often spend 8 – 10 years before they land their first superintendent job, and those of us over 50 wonder if our current job will be our last. I don't think it farfetched to say that today's typical grad will be lucky if he or she manages 20 years in a superintendent capacity.

As for management companies, I do see them as being a cause and effect of the economy, sometimes creating opportunities and sometimes taking them away. Anything that smacks of protectionism goes against a core American value of free trade and competition in the marketplace, so I can see why the issue never came to a head a few years back when pressure could have been exerted to stem the tide.

Your gut instinct – my gut instinct – is to sneer presidential-like and snarl. "Bring 'em on!" when competition appears, but this is not sandlot baseball or playground basketball. It is your career, your earning potential, your children's education, the quality of your life, and your retirement security.

It is you, on the golf course at age 72, either mowing fairways to make ends meet or teeing it up with your buddies.

Helping to steer all these bright, recent turf grads now lining up to take your job into biotechnologies or computer engineering a few years back would not have been unethical or un-American.

When the issue first surfaced in the early 1990s, many of us recommended a conservative approach, but this view was not supported by those organizations that could have influenced or regulated the proliferation of new programs or the expansion of existing ones. I suppose it was the unbridled optimism of the potential limitless growth of golf projected by some

organizations and individual "experts" when we were churning out 400 – 500 new golf courses in this country each year. If there were just enough golf courses, then everyone would sell their bass boats and bowling balls and head over to the local links, right?

Optimism is one thing, but the math always looked fuzzy for those of us who learned to calculate the size of our fairways.

## The Trouble with Turfgrass

### GREEN SIDE UP



Joel Jackson, CGCS

The trouble with turfgrass as most of us know it is that it's an artificial environment that we impose on a local ecological system. Of course regional malls and housing developments that now sit on old orange groves and pastureland are also artificial environments. Thank God for turfgrass to help buffer and filter the runoff and other environmental impacts from such sites and other urban development and sprawl.

And then there are those thousands of miles of turfgrass that border our roads and highways. By keeping a clear field of vision they help with traffic safety.

The trouble with turfgrass of course is that it does need mowing from time to time and some nutrients help keep it thriving during stressful growing conditions.

Native grasses are great out on the prairies and as accents in

landscape and golf course settings; tough for the kids and rover to play in a yard 3 feet deep. Manicuring a yard requires maintenance and regular maintenance is artificial manipulation of the ecology of grass. If you have ever seen a photo of a grass plant in a botany book, it is a gangly looking thing with a seed-head stalk sticking up; not your average suburban homeowners association covenants and restrictions type of thing.

Recently at the Turf and Ornamental Communicators Association conference in Seattle, the

speaker from the Washington County DEP said he could tolerate golf course fairways and roughs, but because the greens were such an artificial surface requiring so much chemical and fertilizer attention, the golf industry should sincerely consider using new and improved artificial turf to avoid the "toxic" inputs.

And when it comes to recent trends in county governments' attempts to conserve water, the best solution they can come up with is to limit the amount of turfgrass on a newly developed lot. Fifty percent seems to be the number in favor right now. Landscape irrigation designs for residential and commercial landscapes seem to be lagging behind golf courses. It would be real interesting to see how they cover little ribbons of turf winding through the ground cover and mulched shrubbery beds.

Using turfgrass limitations as a water-conservation measure violates private property rights as far as I'm concerned. The real waste and overuse as we all know are the irrigation systems that are not managed properly or at all. Golf courses generally get an A-plus on this score because it is such a critical playability factor that we adjust our system settings daily or turn them off when it is raining.

It is certainly no strain for me to flip the Auto/off switch on my home controller out in the garage when

it is raining, but this seems to be too technical for the average homeowner with an automatic system. And we have all seen the commercial and municipal systems running during rainstorms. Those systems are managed by landscape crews that might visit the site once a week. So the trouble really isn't turfgrass, but it gets the blame.

And for that official in Seattle who thinks golf greens are ruining the environment because of their "high maintenance" requirements, the general public still doesn't get it that we are talking about three to four acres of turfgrass scattered over 150 acres in 5,000-square-foot chunks. And while they harbor visions of barrels of pesticides being poured down a funnel into the aquifers or streams, they ignore the scientific evidence that has said and continues to say over and over again that properly applied pesticides and fertilizers just don't cause environmental problems.

The caveat for our industry is that products be properly applied according to the label. I don't think that's too much to ask. Those who don't abide by best management practices and the label don't deserve to be in the business and that goes for those who own the facilities as well. This is no time to be playing fast and loose with the products that have been approved by the EPA. They are too expensive and hard to come by without violating the rules for using them.

Mankind needs turfgrasses a lot more than turfgrass needs mankind. We have learned to manipulate turfgrasses to fit into our lifestyles and recreational past times, and thanks to science and technology, we can maintain those "artificial" turf environments safely when done properly. People with a zero-tolerance policy for pesticides will always oppose these artificial environments, while ignoring their dependence on other chemicals in their lives because they don't appreciate turfgrass like we do.

Grass is the Rodney Dangerfield of plant life; it gets no respect and that's the trouble with turfgrass.