

Thanks for the Memories

By Daniel Zelazek

Now that my final cover in the history books, I would like to say it has indeed been a pleasure and an honor working with the editors and the superintendents of the FGCSA these nearly 30 years.

Funny to think I nearly didn't take this job. I had quit playing golf at the time and I was approached by my old buddy David Bailey about replacing as principal photographer when Harry McCartha retired. In fact, I had given my irons away but Dave was persistent and Dan Jones thought my big camera might be ideally suited to the needs of the Florida Green.

So in the spring of 1981, Associate Editor Dave Bailey and I set off for Bay Hill. Tim Hiers was there on that first photo shoot and gave us a lesson on how the game is really played and we photographed Jimmy Ellis putting on 18 along the railroad ties...yep, 18 had railroad ties for a wall in those days. I had a bit of a problem with a reflection of a light and Mr. Bailey handled it quite capably by hiding in the trees and holding up a trash bag to block the light.

Right from the start I didn't like the vertical format, too restrictive for my style, so with Dave and Dan working the problem and a bit of behind the scenes help from Phil Gardner and Keith Longshore, the Lesco Company bought ad space and our fold-out covers were born in the fall of 1983 and for the next 25 years our covers set us apart from virtually every golf publication in the country!

It certainly wasn't all fun and games. Sometimes great sacrifices had to be made.

Take Black Diamond Ranch. I had wanted to incorporate the quarry holes and I had my buddy Paul pose on holes 14 with 15 and 16 in the distance. His outfit just wasn't the right colour so I pulled the dark slide on my old Deardorff camera, cocked the shutter and walked down to the green and had Paul trip the shutter, putting myself on the cover. That's the kind of sacrifice I'm talking about!

Over the last 30 years the superinten-



Daniel Zelazek. Photo by Joel Jackson

dents have been awesome. They were always willing to reset a flag to the proper position, move a trap rake, build a lift or keep the staff off a particular hole to avoid tracks in the early morning dew.

However, there is one aspect where a good many of you failed miserably...and that is in regards to the weather I requested. Chris Neff and Mark Kann, wipe those smiles off your faces. I'm talking about you! Torrential rain and dense fog are not ideally suited to large format photography.

When I was visiting Joe Pantaleo at Indian Creek the wind was so violent it nearly blew my tripod and camera over. At Greg Norman's stunning Medalist Club, I had to return seven times due to vast amounts of rain in 1995. Fortunately, I lived just down the road in West Palm Beach.

At the Fountains with Mike Perham, we had finished the afternoon views and had lined up a great image for sunrise, even marking our position on the tee with tees in the ground. We arrived well before sunrise and were in position and as the sun rose and so did a bank of clouds, which stayed even with the rising sun for an hour and a half.

Dave Bailey went with me to Jacksonville's Marsh Landing for a shoot, and after the afternoon images were complete, we thought about getting a morning photo

from the roof of the club house. The dormant bermuda and the over-seeded greens and fairways with the striping just perfect would have been spectacular.

However, a front moved through over night and the temperature plummeted to 27 degrees. The following morning the entire roof of the club house was covered with ice. You couldn't climb on it much less set up a camera tripod. So we headed out to #3 which eventually was the cover image and as we stood around freezing with our winter coats on, a group of players from New York came to the tee with shorts on. "Hey guys, you know it's freezing out?" "Nah, this is a lot warmer than where we just came from," they said. "Ok, well, hit 'em straight!"

But the most amazing effort on my behalf was done by Shane Bass, yes that very same past president, who was considerably younger in those days. I had left West Palm for Tallahassee at 5:30 am for the six hour drive to the state capitol. At about 6 am, superintendent Gerri Bucheit called my wife to have me cancel. Too late. It was long before cell phone days. Seems a sudden storm had dropped 5 inches of rain on Tallahassee and the course was literally under water.

Next morning, assistant superintendent Shane Bass had the crew out in the dark repairing washouts that resembled that canyon in Arizona. Sweepers were getting rid of debris left from the receding waters and by noon we made our first exposures. Thanks again Shane it was a monumental effort and it's still appreciated all these years later.

Special thanks to Dan Jones for believing in me and also to Paul Crawford and the Bailey brothers (Dave and Mike) and especially to Joel Jackson, my partner for the last 20 years or so.

And I can't forget Dan Hall. After nearly 30 years I have yet to decide who has the best back yard barbecue, Dan or my old buddies the Klauk brothers (Fred and Glen), but that is a story in itself.

To one and all. Thanks for the memories.
Daniel Zelazek, The Florida Green.