

Editorial features in tune with springtime

Spring has arrived. As many of our readers prepare courses for seasonal play, I'd like to mention a few items that may be of interest to you.

The next couple of issues will offer some interesting editorial features.

The May issue will feature a special section on golf cars, with expanded coverage on golf car accessories, in particular batteries, tires and engines.

Our staff will bring you up to date on the companies who make these products available.

In June, the planned feature will

be especially interesting. The staff will survey superintendents at 30 premier courses across the country to determine product and equipment preferences in key categories.

On to another subject. I had the pleasure of presenting our Architect of the Year award to Tom Fazio



Charles von Brecht
publisher

at the recent opening of the Bayou Club in Largo, Fla.

Listening to Tom comment on the course design while senior professional George Archer led a foursome around the great new course, Tom's love for his work was evident.

By the way, Archer shot 62 on this tough course played from 6,700 yards. See page 41 for more details on this facility.

Are you noticing more high technology products entering the golf course industry?

We saw some at the GCSAA

show, from biodegradable tees to warning systems for hydraulic leaks to moisture retaining soil, and everything between.

I believe our industry is on the verge of continuing new technology to make our industry environmentally sacred!

Please remember ... If you are not receiving *Golf Course News* monthly, fill out the card which will pop out at you a few pages back. Be sure to fill it in entirely and sign it.

I look forward to your questions and comments.

COMMENTARY

Justice takes a vacation on the Big Island

If it weren't real life, the scenario might even be funny.

"Hi there, Mr. Hiyashi. Step right in to the council chambers here. That's right... So you wanna build a course on that 150 acres out there on top of the landfill?"

"Yes."

"Well, that's prime land, ya' know. Grade A. P-r-i-m-e parcel. One of the best we've got here in Hawaii. Hard to find better. Did you realize that?"

"No."

"Yep. P-r-i-m-e. We here on the council agree with the governor. We highly value our p-r-i-m-e land. Any land, for that matter. And we tend to take notice when developers like you come in from Japan, nearly frothin' at the mouth to make money on us honest Americans and trippin' over each other to charge million-buck

m e m b e r -
ship fees.

"We wonder if we're not missin' somethin'.

We wonder if you're not takin' advantage of us. We wonder if

you've got somethin' up your kimono. We wonder if that golf course you wanna build is goin' to destroy our p-r-i-m-e land... We wonder a lotta things, Mr. Hiyashi."

"Yes, I see that."

"So you've wandered into Wonderland, Mr. Hiyashi."

"Yes, so I have."

"One thing we don't wonder, Mr. Hiyashi, is that we would be a wonder-ful people to allow you to build



Mark Leslie
managing editor

on that p-r-i-m-e landfill, er, land."

"Yes, and I thank you for being so kind as to listen to my proposal."

"You're welcome. Now, there's just one last thing, Mr. Hiyashi."

"What's that?"

"It's the mere matter of our im-pact fee."

"Impact fee? As in impacting what?"

"Impacting our p-r-i-m-e land. Impacting the neighborhood. Impacting these council chambers. Impacting our land ownership parameters. You name it. Impacting!"

"OK. I'm preserving open space, bringing in tourist dollars, adding jobs to the economy. The negative impact can't be much. What do you want?"

"Just \$20 million. It was \$100 million for the last guy."

"Phew-w. I'll have to think about

that."

"You just do that, Mr. Hiyashi. Goodbye."

"Next! Yes, you, come on in. So you want to build a course on that swamp, er wetland area, Mr. Itimo?"

Targeting Japanese developers, Hawaii is hitting up golf course proposals for megamillion-dollar "impact fees."

Until this is challenged in the courts, it seems the government can now play hostage with its approval process.

Extortion is an illusory thing sometimes. In this case, it's pretty blatant.

Either a decision is just or it is not. American citizens—or anyone else—should not have to pay for just decisions or righteousness from our government officials.

GUEST COMMENTARY

My, how times have changed... EPA who?

By Vern Putney

How times change!

A quarter-century ago, there was no Environmental Protection Agency, and the golf professional was recognized by the press as the golf club's official spokesman.

Now, scarcely a move relating to course site, construction, reconstruction, renovation or improvement is made without considering EPA impact.

Course superintendents, long content to labor anonymously in the background, increasingly are trying to make their views known to a media that for many years would have been hard put to identify the super by full name, but knew pro shop staffers well.

That was understandable. Shop assistants dealt directly with the sports staff, calling in tournament sweepstakes scores and funneling other routine information.

And admittedly the supers' efforts at complete course coverage,

a 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. job,

starting with greens dew sweeping in the early morning and tugging water hoses around the course in the evening, left little time for chit-chat with the Fourth Estate.

It should be conceded that a call from the pro was a bit more glamorous to the frequently cynical press than contact by a work-a-day course super whose subject might be too technical to grasp and indeed might have little of reading interest to the public.

Here I should inject that one such call changed my life.

Clayton V. Sweeney, veteran pro at Riverside Golf Course in Portland, Maine, was friendly with Portland Press Herald sports edi-



Vern Putney
contributing editor

tor Blaine Davis. Sweeney called Davis Nov. 1, 1946, stating that his assistant had just wound up seasonal employment and was interested in the newspaper business. Were there any job openings?

Four days later I was a sports writer, decidedly unqualified but most enthusiastic.

And what a whirlwind 35 years! As Davis often commented wryly, "It beats working." A comparable call from a course super would have carried little weight. The relationship between the sports editor and press relations-conscious Sweeney served as job entry.

Those of us introduced to golf as caddies in the Great Depression learned early that, while six-time Maine Open champion and later National Senior champion Ernest W. Newnham was to be properly admired for playing skills and rigid adherence to game rules, there was much toil and activity behind the scenes at Portland Country Club.

Greenkeeper (as it was then known) John Parsons presided over PCC course fortunes for two decades, and successor Ernest "Pete" Ruby was to rack up a half-century of service.

They remained in the background, not necessarily shunning the spotlight, but immersed in what they felt was their main function, course maintenance and improvement.

It's now a new era. Modern technology has eased back-breaking labor. Where once it was necessary to grab a shovel, the super now must reach for the phone or bang away at the typewriter or computer to get his message across to the public via the media.

While the old-timer would have been uncomfortable in that role, the modern super accepts and in most cases welcomes as an integral part of his job the dissemination of information. He's bolstered by

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The times just keep on changing in golf, reports Putney

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education to interpret and explain the latest advisories and rulings on such complex issues as pesticides, pollution and water.

Roger L. Lowell, super at Webhannet Golf Course in Kennebunk, Maine, and Maine Golf Course Superintendents Association president, declares that public relations has become an absolute requirement.

The evolution of the golf course industry has placed the superintendent, he says, into an ever-increasing complex position, requir-

ing added knowledge.

"There are many great educational programs available to expand understanding and prepare the superintendent for his or her very professional position," he said.

"Twenty or 30 years ago, the superintendent was responsible solely to the club for which he or she worked. Today, that responsibility extends beyond their club to include state and federal agencies as well as to the neighboring public and, for that matter, to the public in general.

"Today, superintendents have a

tremendous responsibility. They have had to become environmentalists in every sense of the word. With educational emphasis by so many universities, the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America, the U. S. Golf Association and local chapters, the superintendent can become expert on environmental issues.

"Greenskeeping of the past was an art," he continues. "Now the superintendent has become a professional technician, business manager, civic official and a liaison between the golf course and the

general public."

Brian M. Silva, golf course architect who works with Geoffrey S. Cornish of Amherst, Mass., believes the "ink" is out there in the newspaper and television marketplace.

"However, presenting the supers' side won't become commonplace," he warned, "unless they work at it. It's hard to get attention with limited contact. It's the 'squeaking wheel that gets the grease.' One must be visible."

The well-traveled Silva notes that golf writers at larger newspapers nationwide welcome news from

supers and are very cooperative. "Seldom is there outright rejection. This also goes for TV golf reporters glad to provide brief camera coverage and commentary."

The key is to initiate contact, Silva added.

That's a point worth exploring. Though I wrote the bulk of golf material for three Portland papers dating from 1947 and in many cases initiated and developed several super features, I was not contacted directly by the state organization until 1974.

Dave Huff of Bow, N.H., O.M. Scott's New England representative who has chaired superintendents' meetings, asked me to address the group on public relations. Thereafter, I attended sessions whenever possible. Their "shop talk" was a bit deep for me, but I gleaned many column tidbits. They were not as taciturn or laconic as portrayed.

George S. Wemyss of Wakefield, Mass., recently retired New England Professional Golfers Association executive director, emphasized the positive effect of joint meetings of New England pros and supers the past four years.

"They see each other's problems more clearly, and speak almost as one voice when communicating with the press," he said.

These sessions have worked so well that the pros plan several meetings with club managers. Not too long ago, a movement elevating managers to much more authority in the clubs' scheme of operations gained some prominence.

There remains a couple such instances, but Wemyss thinks the separate structure of pro-superintendent-manager power will remain.

"Attempt at consolidation under manager control usually failed because there was lack of expertise in these specialized fields," he said.

As long as sports departments are ruled by whim, caprice and space — particularly the latter which always is in short supply — there will be no magic formula for getting into print. The super, armed only with solid fact, doesn't rate the attention of demonstration or protest.

Still, the challenge is there. Creativity, inventiveness and enterprise might just work.

Club Group affiliate buys Persimmon

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — Persimmon Ridge Golf Club was recently acquired by an affiliate of The Club Group, Ltd. of Hilton Head, S.C.

The acquisition included the golf course, clubhouse and a golf academy. In addition, The Club Group has an option to purchase land for an additional 18-hole course.

Persimmon Ridge gained statewide stature soon after opening in June 1989. It has been ranked the toughest course in Kentucky by the publication *Business First* and the number two course in the state by *Golf Week*.



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