

# Reflecting back and looking forward for GCN

By Charles von Brecht

As I write this column on a flight, heading home to St. Petersburg, Fla., after barely escaping an all-night snowstorm in Maine, I reflect on the last few years of *Golf Course News*.



Charles von Brecht

Less than three years ago, it was a non-entity. We launched with a premiere issue at the '89 GCSAA show in Anaheim, Calif. I will remember that particular event forever with both fondness and

sadness.

Sadly, I buried my father just a day or two before we headed west and, quite frankly, I'm sorry that he is not here to share with me the success that *Golf Course News* has enjoyed. My fond memories of the show were the consistent positive comments from prospective readers and advertisers on the need for a publication like ours. That positive reaction has come to fruition as we end the year and begin a new one with this issue.

What's in store for 1992? You will see some consistent, though subtle, changes. Our commitment to the industry is stronger than ever, and our goal is to be the Number One publica-

tion in the industry. We're not far from that goal. Our average qualified circulation already has surpassed *Golf Course Management*, and we're growing significantly in ad pages as they decline.

We will introduce new editorial features in an ongoing effort to bring to our readers all the important news of the industry. We most likely will expand our staff to enhance our editorial quality and credibility. And we will add at least one more industry-related conference to our schedule in the coming year.

Many industries are suffering during this recession, and golf is not immune. But courses still are being

planned and opened coast to coast. The National Golf Foundation and our editors say 250-300 new courses will open in 1992. Added to that are many major renovations. It all adds up to increased business for suppliers and employment opportunities. Several of our advertisers tell me 1991 was their best year ever and they are planning for another good year in 1992.

A lot can happen in a year — and a year from now I will look back on this report and see just how we're doing at that time. I look forward to another positive update.

Have a happy and prosperous New Year!

COMMENT

## Some tidbits and bits from a great year — 1991

By Mark Leslie

Some odds and ends, favorites and not-so-favorites picked up from the wonderful year of 1991.

Some of my favorite tidbits come from the fall hurricane season. Here are a few:

*How do they get those ships in the bottles?*

My favorite story from Hurricane



Mark Leslie

Grace, which tore into the Atlantic Coast last fall, came from Cape Cod, Massachusetts. The story goes like this: Driven by 78-mph winds, ferocious waves crashed ashore and drove a house partially off its foundation. Another wave deposited a boat in the basement, and yet another moved the house back close to its original position on the foundation. When the owner arrived and walked down the cellar steps, what to his wondering eyes should

appear? A boat sitting in deep water in his basement!

*A storm, a cleanup, an auction:* "I've got a propane tank here. Do I hear two? Yes, two, over here. Can anyone raise that? A refrigerator? Yes, a refrigerator over here. Can anyone top a refrigerator? A Catamaran from that man in the red shirt. That's our bid, a Catamaran. Do I hear... A house!?!?" Hurricane Grace left a lot of memories on the East Coast. But most memorable to some golf course superintendents were the things left on their courses by the flooding ocean waters.

*The Mr. Community Service Award:* Step on up and get your plaque, Rich Caughey. The superintendent at Watherly Country Club in North Scituate, Mass., Caughey put his six-man crew to work clearing three feet of sand off the North Scituate and Minot roads so people could return to their homes following Hurricane Grace.

Best quote in the wake (sorry for Continued on page 33



GUEST COMMENTARY

## Golf's 'Megafactors' in the 1990s spelled out

By Steven H. Lesnik

Golf in the 1980s was like John Daly's swing: big, successful and something the game had rarely seen before. It was the "grip it and rip it" decade of easy money. If a project saw any early promise, financing wasn't far behind.



Steven Lesnik

While today's financial conditions are much different, they aren't the only thing affecting golf management. The industry is more complex, more demanding, yet for those who succeed, more rewarding.

If the 1980s was the decade of golf speculation, the 1990s will be the era of the double-edged sword in golf.

The pros and cons of golf as big business will become more apparent than ever in the 1990s as real-

ism replaces euphoria, and economic conditions separate true golf operators from golf speculators. It will be an era that requires sound management.

The need for more stringent business practices and philosophies is caused by a variety of factors that will affect everyone in the business.

These factors are so pervasive I call them "Megafactors." I don't think anyone is likely to escape their impact.

How each of us responds to these Megafactors will ultimately determine our success. Of course, some issues will affect each of us differently. Circumstances may cause one or more of the Megafactors to work in one's favor in one part of the country while they might be to one's disadvantage in another region.

Overall, though, I believe the Megafactors will be a net plus. From potentially most harmful to potentially most helpful, the Megafactors I see are:

- *Scarcity of capital:* Golf devel-

opment is a capital-intensive business. To flourish, it requires patient capital — a plentiful resource a few years ago, but scarce in today's domestic credit market, especially at S&Ls that historically have been the financial backbone of real-estate financing.

Despite less-than-rosy economic circumstances — tight domestic commercial credit, similar financial restrictions in Europe, government policy-makers preparing the economy for an election year, and wary Japanese investors who hang in the balance — it's my view that economically sound projects will nevertheless continue to attract discerning investors.

- *Environment:* Environmental hurdles are rising higher and higher. Golf course development is a visible enterprise that uses large tracts of virgin land near affluent population centers. It, therefore, attracts interest groups who, like responsible members of the golf industry, are committed to pre-

serving wetlands, wooded conservancies, natural sanctuaries, wildlife habitats and waterways.

As more open space is devoured through urban sprawl, environmental pressures will continue to mount on golf developers.

- *Competition:* The National Golf Foundation says America needs many more golf courses. That's surely true, on a national basis. On a micro basis, however, there is such a condition as too much of a good thing. Parts of the country have become sated, where competition is fierce and another golf course is not a "no-brainer" recipe for success.

Chicago, a golf market that has grown substantially in recent years, is one example. Competition in Chicago's upscale daily-fee market was virtually non-existent a decade ago. Today, that niche boasts a number of fine facilities and is highly competitive.

- *Need for land:* A first-class fa-

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