

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!

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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!

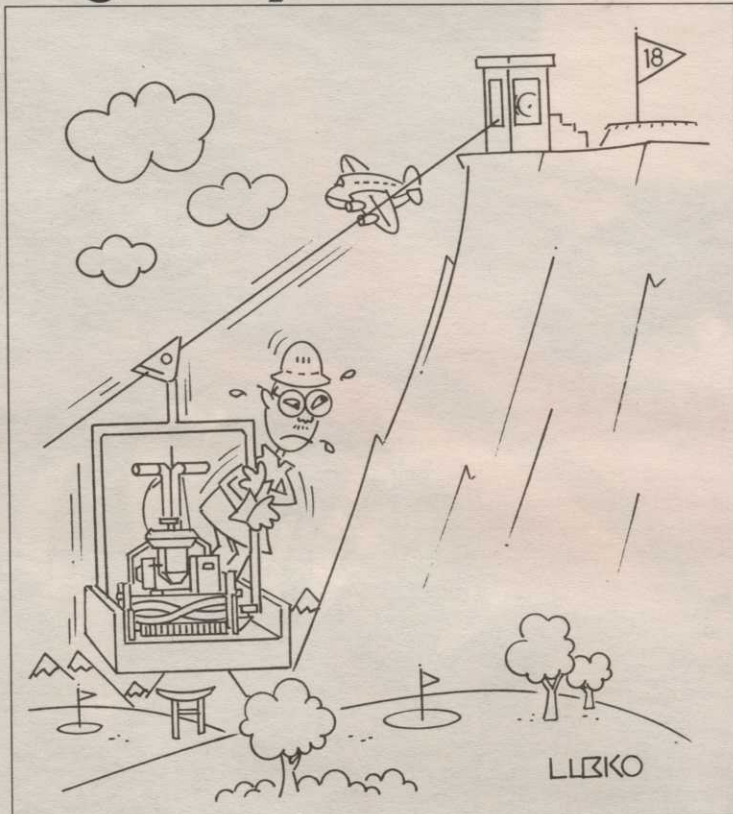
A storm, a cleanup, an auction:

"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

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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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Golf courses newly approved around the United States

Golf Course News is publishing these lists — on this and the opposite page — monthly from our sources and with the assistance of *Forecast Golf Marketing & Financial Systems, Inc.* of Richmond, Va. The chart at right includes courses that have been approved around the country in the past month. The list below contains the sites and contacts for new courses and renovations in the planning stages. When those courses are ready to begin construction they will be listed again in this "Courses newly approved in the U.S." chart.

We would appreciate your help in updating these lists. To contact us call 207-846-0600 or write *Golf Course News*, P.O. Box 997, Yarmouth, Maine 04096.

Under "Type" — D= Daily Fee; P= Private; and M= Municipal.

Under "Class" — R= Regulation; E= Executive; P= Par 3.

Under "Work" — N= New; R= Renovation.

Location	Course Name	Type	Class	Work	Contact
Arkansas					
Pine Bluff	To Be Announced	D	R	N	Mike Drewett, Parks and Rec. Dir.
California					
Diablo Range	To Be Announced	R	N		Shea Homes San Jose
Colorado					
Mesa County	Chipeta National GC (Course #1)	R	N		Ned Wilson
Mesa County	Chipeta National GC (Course #2)	P	N		Ned Wilson
Hawaii					
Maui	Grand Hyatt Wailea	D	R	N	Wailea Resort Co. Ltd.
Illinois					
Okawville	Okawville CC	N/A	N		Jack Valian
Indiana					
Indianapolis	Indianapolis Motor Speedway GC	D	R	R	Pete Dye
Kentucky					
Daviess County	The Summit CC	P	R	N	Don Charles
Michigan					
Kalkaska County	To Be Announced	R	N		
Ohio					
Centerville	To Be Announced	M	R	N	Darryl Kenning, City Mgr.
Lockbourne	Foxfire Golf Club	D	R	N	Barry Serafin
Oregon					
Dallas	To Be Announced (Course #1)	P	R	N	Dong Keun Chaey Salem
Dallas	To Be Announced (Course #2)	D	R	N	Dong Keun Chaey Salem
Pennsylvania					
Chester County	Stonewall	P	R	N	Tom Fazio
Utah					
West Bountiful	To Be Announced	M	R	N	City Council
Washington					
Stevenson	Skamania Lodge	D	R	N	Gene Mason
Wisconsin					
Weston	Greenwood Hills CC	P	R	N	Houdek GC Const.

Tidbits around the industry

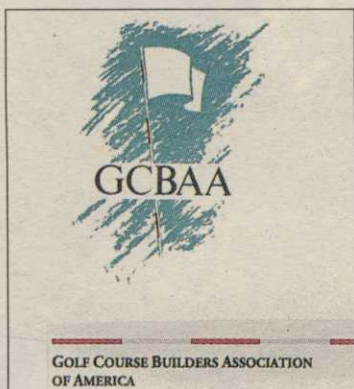
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the pun) of a hurricane: After Hurricane Bob brought the ocean (and its turf-killing salt water) to the shore on Cape Cod, Hyannisport Club superintendent Charles Passios said: "I've got three greens and 15 browns."

Greatest quandary: Eastward Ho CC has wind insurance but no tidal insurance. The insurance company ruled that damage to the course from Grace was caused by the tides. "Well," said superintendent Brian Cowan, "if we hadn't had 78-mile-per-hour winds we wouldn't have had that tidal surge." The decision could be settled in the courts.

Talking about tidal waves and other topics...

Reverse the curse—please! People in the golf industry responded in splendid fashion when, in 1989, the word went out from England that a dying little boy, Craig Shergold's last wish was to be entered in the Guinness Book of World Records for receiving the most get-well cards. They came in by the thousands — from Margaret Thatcher and Prince Charles. From Ronald Reagan, George Bush and Mikhail Gorbachev. From Michael Jackson and Sylvester Stallone. From Jan Beljan and... Jan Beljan? Yes, but! But, the lady architect in Tom Fazio's Jupiter, Fla., design firm now wants the golf industry — and, indeed, the world — to STOP! Craig will live. He no longer needs the cards. And, in fact, he very much wants the mail to stop. At 15,000



GCBA's letterhead

cards and letters a day, his south London post office is quite in agreement. Craig had a miraculous recovery after Charlottesville, Va., billionaire John Kluge stepped in, found a neurosurgeon who had a new technology, and, well, the rest is history — and God's hand.

For her part, Beljan has written all the people she first contacted through the chain letter that went like wildfire through the golf industry. Oh yes, the record. The old record was 1.3 million. Craig's new record is 16.2 million. He's alive, happy, and in Guinness. So, please stop the chain letters. The family — whose church has had weekly sing-alongs where everyone helps open letters — has 400 bags of mail that have yet to be opened stored in warehouses.

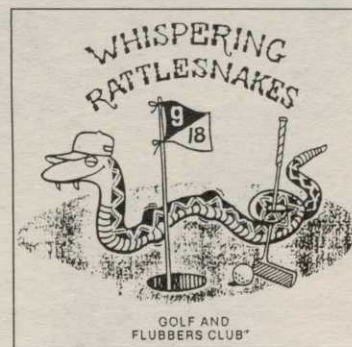
Greatest letterhead of all golf industry association: The Golf Course Builders Association of America, hands down. Executive Director Phil Arnold followed organization's name change with a creative logo that knocks the socks off the rest. *Is this a gondola ride or a golf round?* The label "mountain course" has been taken to new heights (a-hem!) in Japan. But, come on now. Can we believe this? Like many courses in

land-scarce Japan, Tsutsujigaoka ("Amalea Hills") Country Club was blasted out of a ridge. Paths between greens and tees are so formidable that half are equipped with so-called autoslopes — push-button conveyor belts that carry golfers up or down to the next hole. To get to the 18th tee, golfers must mount an autoslope, but that's not the end of the ride. They then have to pile into a funicular gondola for the final 100 yards.

Buddy, wanna give me a light? A number of golf clubs ban smoking to keep their courses clean. But, to avoid disaster? One course on an island off Tokyo harbor bans smoking so the place doesn't go boom! The site used to be a landfill and operators are afraid of methane gas exploding.

An idea born by a board-game guy: Michael Hurdzan-designed Devil's Pulpit golf course outside Caledon, Ontario, Canada, was developed by Trivial Pursuit creators Chris Haney and Scott Abbott. It was little surprise, then, that some of the holes took on, let's say, innovative character. There's the CN Tower hole, with a view of the CN Tower in Toronto 35 miles away; the Memorial Hole, built around a gravesite; a hole with a double green; et cetera. Then there's the betting hole, called Jun's Hole after partner Jun Matsuura, who died in an automobile accident in 1990. The hole is actually a hidden 19th hole in the back nine. If you play it, you bet on it.

Greatest logo for a golf course: Bob Spiwak, come on down. When golf writer-photographer Spiwak built his own nine-hole course on his "back 40" in Winthrop, Wash., he got national attention. But to make it official, he just had to de-



Bob Spiwak's logo

sign a logo. Whispering Rattlesnakes Golf and Flubbers Club's mascot is a snazzy rattler with a smile on his face, a hat on his crown and a putter in his tail. Bob's obviously a talented guy himself — smile on his face, hat on his head and artist's pen in his hand. **Most astounding demographic statistic:** The average age of members at exclusive Eastward Ho Country Club in Chatham, Mass., is 74.

A real trouper helps the troops: Nora Berard of Foxboro (Mass.) Country Club didn't make this public. But we will. Nora gave her late professional-manager Dad's clubs — which totaled "scads," according to one insider — along with tees, gloves and grips, to George R. McGrory for his teaching program for handicapped schoolchildren in North Palm Beach, Fla. McGrory sure could use 20 acres now.

The absolute, most extraordinary — and even very best — calendar from a golf course architect: Robert Trent Jones Jr. has done some absolutely extraordinary — among the very best — courses in the last couple of years. They are captured in absolutely extraordinary breathtaking angles in his 1992 calendar. Photographers are John and Jeannine Henebry, Brian Morgan

and Stephen Munday.

A hidden nugget to check out next time you're near Tequesta, Fla.: Riverbend Country Club, featuring eight par-4s and one par-5 on 60 acres of land, built for around \$350,000 in 1972 and designed by George and Tom Fazio.

"It's never going to get the publicity, or be rated in the top 100. It won't get the notoriety of Shadow Creek or Wild Dunes. But when you look at the product — with the land, the environment, the cost and the end result of what you did and had to work with, I love it," said Tom Fazio.

Press advisory: The Golf Course News office received a "press advisory" announcing a public meeting on dioxin to be held Nov. 15 in Washington, D.C. A problem, you ask? Yes, getting there on time. We received the advisory on Dec. 1.

Dress code or bust: Alco-Sport of Aurora, Ohio, says first-time players are slowing down the game of golf with "a new problem... dress code." The solution, according to president Al Schroeder, might well be his company's dress code card. It can be used like a greeting card for member-guest or invitational tournaments — whatever — to let visitors know a club's dress rules. Since it is not just a men-only problem, Schroeder is working on a women's version.

Best Get-Those-Reindeer-Outta-Here Potion: Colorado's Estes Park golf course personnel put elephant poop around their greens to keep the elk off. While elephant poop may be hard to come by, the city of Milwaukee is pushing its Milorganite, a product from its effluent treatment plant, as a deterrent to deer on ornamentals.

Poor elk...