

# An apology for Jimmy, after all these years

A quick, rightward glance to our masthead reveals an addition to the staff here at *Golf Course News*. I've recently been named editor of this fair publication, thus ending my run through the nocturnal, sometimes caustic world of daily newspapers.

As a longtime golfer and lover of course design, I accepted the editorship of *Golf Course News* with enthusiasm and without hesitation. In this space each month I plan to blather at some length on subjects to my liking; subjects gathered willy nilly from my experiences on the course, on the road and among industry professionals.

Oftentimes, new editors christen their column spaces with sentiments like these: "Hello, so glad to be here... This is your publication, so don't hesitate to write us letters... We will continue to deliver the outstanding product that you, our valued readers, have come to expect..." etc., etc.

Well, I am glad to be here; we do actively seek your input — positive or negative — through letters to the

editor; and indeed, we will continue to serve the golf industry each month with informative stories of interest.

However, I'd like to begin my editorial tenure with something a little different: an apology. Yes, I'd like to throw myself on the mercy of Jimmy, head superintendent at Nehoiden Golf Club in Wellesley, Mass.

I grew up across the street from Nehoiden, a quirky, private nine-hole course owned and operated by Wellesley College. Nothing about Nehoiden is run-of-the-mill. There is no clubhouse — members bear special tags and maintenance crew members collect guest fees haphazardly whilst traveling around the course.

An empty house sits at the geographic center of the course, wedged in between the first green and second tee. When I was a kid, the gentleman who oversaw Nehoiden lived there with his wife, six kids and two belligerent German shepherds.



Hal Phillips  
editor

And because it's owned by an institute of higher learning, students sometimes use the sixth fairway for gym class — at which time both the sixth and seventh holes are off limits to members, or anyone else for that matter.

In any event, I grew up across the street from Nehoiden and the course was my playground. We staged mock military battles in the bunkers; rode our bikes across fairways past unwitting foursomes; and played football in the rough on No. 7.

However, our greatest source of joy was not the play itself... It was the thrill of leading angry crew members — like poor Jimmy — on madcap chases all over the course.

One hot summer night, while playing in the sprinklers on No. 6, our frolic was interrupted by several beams of light. Frozen with fear, we looked up to see Jimmy and

a pack of flashlight-bearing campus police bearing down on us. Soaking wet, my friends and I managed to outrun them... We fancied ourselves veritable fugitives from justice.

Sometimes we were caught, chastised and summarily booted from the premises. Other times we escaped into the woods on either side of the aqueduct, which borders Nehoiden to the south.

In any case, my friends and I were thoroughly obnoxious and major headaches to poor Jimmy & Co., who were simply trying to keep the course well conditioned and free of satanic brats.

Jimmy, I'm sorry. Please accept my heartfelt apologies.

I was young and impetuous; a kid looking for adventure to break the monotonous humdrum of his suburban existence. Through my work here at *Golf Course News*, I hope to make it up to you.

And while we're on the subject — about those tire tracks on the eighth green...

It wasn't me.

## COMMENTARY

# This year's Birdies ... the envelopes, please

I am not convinced *Silence of the Lambs* is better than the best the golf industry could have offered for the Oscars competition. Nor can I imagine that Anthony Hopkins was the year's superior talent. So I've devised my own list of choices for the golf industry — The Birdie.

Without further adieu, here goes:  
Best Animated Short: Brian Silva. Small in stature but tall in humor, Silva wins this Birdie with a dozen jokes to spare.

Best Special Effects: Bonnet Creek Golf Club, the new creation at

Disney World in Orlando, Fla., which welcomes visitors with huge spun aluminum golf tees in front of the clubhouse (see photo on page 27). Please come forward to accept your statuette, Forrest and Valerie Richardson of Richardson or Richardson in Phoenix, Ariz., who designed all Bonnet Creek's signage (see story on page 21).

Best Photography: Tony Roberts of Scottsdale, Ariz., whose work



Mark Leslie  
managing editor

adorns books and is featured in magazine articles and advertisements across the country. Plus he's an all-around great guy with a talented wife, Leslie, who makes sure he's in the right country at the right time. Come on

down, Tony!

Best Script: Don Tolson of the new Fox Hollow golf course being built in Lakewood, Colo. Who could write a fictional piece that would

compare to Tolson's retelling of the struggle to win approval to build this course? I especially love the statements from equestrians who declared that the golf course would do more damage to the terrain than the major erosion along horse trails.

Best Foreign Production: Devil's Paintbrush, the second of two golf courses designed by Dr. Michael Hurdzan of Columbus, Ohio, for Trivial Pursuit creators Chris Haney and Scott Abbott. A take-your-breath-away challenge in Caledon,

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## GUEST COMMENT

# Selling the game to land-use decision-makers

By Robert Trent Jones Jr.

Throughout 1991, economic forecasters gave ominous weather reports, and, to be sure, we have seen financing dry up in once fertile areas. Any number of projects have been set on the shelf, and dismal financial storm clouds are predicted well into 1992.

But, we do see a much more menacing threat to golf out there. It is pervasive and it is building with each passing day in this country and to a slightly lesser extent around the world. This threat makes new golf courses nearly impossible to construct in some areas of the United States and drives up planning and development costs to the sky in others.

The major concern to our industry is the so-called "environmental movement," which has targeted golf courses

for capital punishment.

These folks, a few of them well intentioned but most only hiding under the "environmental cloak," have become a part of the golf course permit approval process at every level of government, from the local planning commission to the Supreme Court.

Every developer knows about them, and the golf course architect can almost call them by name in some parts of the country. Their familiar refrain is: "The golf course is a good idea. It is just in the wrong place."

The fact is, they don't like golf courses anywhere. It's obviously a political feeling, but they just don't like the game. They see it as an elitist pastime. It occupies too much space. It takes too long to play. It is not the people's game.

Most of these people are not too crazy about the concept of private property, either, and they detest the idea of a private golf club. But, they play no favorites. They oppose public

course proposals with the same zeal and frenzy ignited by a scheme for a members-only club.

Their strategy is to defeat the golf course at the earliest stage of the approval process. Do not allow any zoning changes. Raise environmental issues. Bring as much lobbying pressure on the planning commissioner or councilor as possible. Be loud and vocal at every meeting and planning session. Push hard for immediate denial.

Failing that, the strategy shifts to elongating the process, in terms of both time and money.

You see, it is almost like the old cry of "Man the barricades" in the French Revolution. That piece of history was accomplished with volunteers, and so it is with this political approval process.

The obstructionist ploy is to use volunteers at every level. Some people just like a good fight, even an unfair one. They are always available to speak, to hoot, to applaud — even to carry

placards and demonstrate in front of the county courthouse.

In the meantime, the developer is taking a risk. Perhaps he has option payments on the land. He has fees to pay to lawyers, engineers, various consultants and golf course architects.

So, if an early denial of the course idea is not achieved, the plan is to stretch the process out as far as possible. Make the costs so burdensome that the developer will fold up his camp and head elsewhere. Just as soon as he reaches "elsewhere," he will find the very same crowd (or one that looks just like it) waiting to greet him.

Most of the uproar created by these hostile political ruffians revolves around environmental issues. They can make the golf course sound like a toxic waste dump. In spite of the fact that the course only accommodates some 30 people an hour, they can make the area around it look like

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**Editorial Office**  
Golf Course News  
PO Box 997  
38 Lafayette Street  
Yarmouth, ME 04096  
(207) 846-0600

**Advertising Office**  
**National Sales:**  
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**Golf Course News**  
7901 Fourth St. North  
Suite 311  
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## Sell the game

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gridlock in Manhattan for all the traffic it will cause.

Legitimate facts and integrity pretty much go out the window when the opposition heats up, as the litany is always the same. The golf course drives the animals away. The birds disappear. The soil will be choked with chemicals, and on and on.

Even though 10 percent of the U.S. population plays golf, some 30 million of us out there, the city or county officials involved often don't, and they are easily persuaded by these silly and baseless arguments.

### A FAMILIAR REFRAIN

As you read this, does it ring a bell? How many golf course projects have you heard of or read about that have been challenged in this manner? Defeated?

How many do you suppose were never even presented because those with the idea, those willing to take a risk, knew they would not be playing on a level field?

As we embark on the voyage of 1992, the threat to golf is only related to economics in the sense that the permit process is very expensive and getting more so.

It is this political rite of passage that is the really serious problem.

If those of us in the industry are not able to provide the playing facilities for those who currently play golf or would very much like to, our protagonists will, indeed, be correct. It will once again become an elitist game and beyond the financial reach of the average person.

The answer is obviously to form our own band of volunteers. Those who love the game need to step forward and shout loudly that golf is the absolute preservation of open space. The golf course is an animal habitat, a bird sanctuary and a permanent greenbelt area.

It provides wetlands that were never there before. When disasters strike in places like Pebble Beach and the San Francisco East Bay hills, it provides a firebreak.

The golf course is part of the reoxygenation process. The greenery it provides actually produces clean fresh air to breathe.

Each golf course provides hundreds of thousands of recreational hours each year for senior

citizens, youngsters and just ordinary folks.

Golf courses are for all to enjoy, those who play as well as those who just appreciate the pastoral ambience it provides.

We all agree growth is a problem in various parts of the country. Where we are located in California, it is a particular problem in places like the San Fernando Valley, San Jose, Sacramento and San Diego. Some view the golf course as a portent of development to follow. But, the golf course is part of the solution, not the problem.

We desperately need more golf courses, especially good public ones. Instead of denying permits, every city council and board of supervisors in the country ought to be seeking ways to provide more golf. Sanitary landfills and the areas in the vicinity of airports come immediately to mind.

Our golf associations around the country should have regular support groups for new golf course ideas and proposals.

On the Monterey Peninsula, we designed and built Poppy Hills for the more than 140,000 members of the Northern California Golf Association. It now does more than 60,000 rounds a year, played mostly by those dues-paying members who own it and their guests. What an outstanding model for other broadly based golf organizations to follow.

As often as possible, our people attend seminars and business conferences relating to the golf industry. We also appear at countless planning commission, city council and board of supervisors meetings. In many cases we feel like the goalie in an ice hockey game, warding off one slap shot after another about the game of golf.

If there is a single message in all this, it is to live

the game, as well as play it. Step forward and be a spokesperson for golf whenever a challenge is issued. Support good sound ideas in your community which will provide new courses and the opportunities for others to play and enjoy the game.

If you are reading this, you are one of those close to 30 million in the United States who play the game for the fun and friendships it provides. Let's not let it return to the elitist game it was before folks like Ike and Arnie convinced us golf was a game for everyone.

Instead, let's join together and actually sell the game to those who make land-use decisions. Loud and clear, let's let them know our vote is for open space, greenbelts, wetlands, animals and wholesome fun and exercise.

Oh, don't forget the birds, either ... or should I say birdies?

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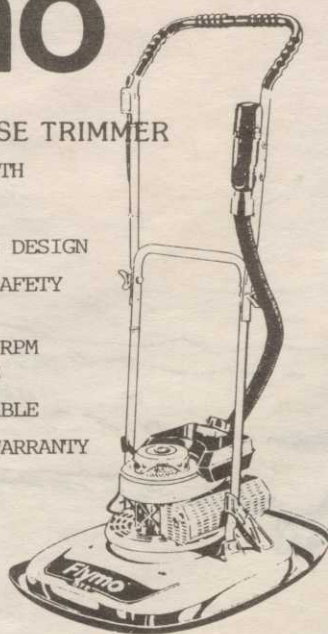
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