

Fight the good fight, get the good word out

The golf industry is at war. If you don't believe it, four stories in this month's edition of *Golf Course News* clearly illustrate the nature of the conflict.

It's a war of public relations and it centers on what defines a "good neighbor." Are golf courses "good neighbors"? The answer almost doesn't matter, because the question is flawed. The better query is this: "Are golf courses perceived to be good neighbors?"

And the answer is no.

Anti-growth special-interest groups, often disguised in grass-root skirts, have taken their messages to the seats of power and directly to the people — any place where laws are written and public opinion is formulated. Has it been effective?

Well, has it become harder or easier to gain golf-course-construction approval? Is it harder or easier to register products with the EPA?

Enough said.

Yet, after watching this process get the better of them, golf industry patriots are beginning to fight back.

Turn to page 3 and read about the National Golf Foundation's report on the economic impact of golf. Much of the NGF findings seem like common sense: Golf courses create jobs, pay huge taxes and spur local economic activity.

Common sense? Certainly. But if the NGF doesn't put the word out, John Q. Public continues to view golf courses as playgrounds for the rich, completely devoid of positive civic impact.

Turn to page 1 and read about Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment, or RISE. This is an industry association formed by chemical companies, but it's also a lobbying group.

After watching local commu-



Hal Phillips
editor

nities overrule the EPA on numerous technical/scientific matters, action was taken. Now Congress is close to approving legislation that would re-establish EPA authority by preempting local powers.

...

There's more to be done, however.

Turn to page 1 and read Mark Leslie's expose on Richard Klein, who makes a living by whipping communities into a frenzy over the environmental impact of golf course construction. In May, *Golf Course News* ran a cover story on Gen Morita, a Japanese "environmentalist" whose sole mission in life is to stop golf course proliferation.

This is the type of activity the golf course community must combat. Sitting idly by — hoping people will see through

the gibberish — has not proven effective. It's time to offer proactive responses to Klein, Morita and others like them.

Some have taken issue with our decision to write about Morita and Klein. Critics believe we give them publicity they don't deserve.

I couldn't disagree more. The golf course industry needs to know about Morita and Klein because the golf industry itself must answer their often fatuous assertions. Ignoring them won't make them go away.

Colleague Mark Leslie believes the golf industry needs a hired gun of its own — someone armed with facts to refute the Kleins and Moritas of the world, someone to attend every zoning board of appeals meeting in America (see below).

In any case, the golf industry must take the message to the people, because facts nearly always triumph over fanaticism.

The golf industry could use a hired gun of its own

"Have gun, will travel," reads the card of a man.

Remember Paladin? Where is Richard Boone now — when we so badly need him?

Today's golf development scene is often like an old Western movie, "Showdown at the O.K. Corral Planning Board."

This is serious stuff and not to be made light of, but the similarity is stunning.

The problem is, here in the real world the guys on one side (the self-styled anti-growth environ-

mentalists) bring their hired gun into town, and the folks on the other side (the golf industry) have a barn full of ammunition but no gunslinger.

Richard Klein (see story on page 1) has made it his life's work to stop golf course development. He says he wants development to proceed, with restrictions. But the fruit of his work belies that statement.

What is most dangerous



Mark Leslie
managing editor

about Klein is that he speaks authoritatively, as if he is an expert on pesticide runoff, fertilizer use, heavy metals, whatever is called for at the moment. Laypeople actually believe what he says — and, when no one stands up to

confront and disprove him, that kills golf projects.

Pierre-Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais, a 17th-century French dramatist and business-

man once said: "It is not necessary to understand things in order to argue about them."

Here at O.K. Corral Planning Board, Beaumarchais' statement is borne out.

Truth is all we ask.

As Maryland developer Lex Birney said: "If things are wrong, or there are interpretations of any scientific data that should be made and they don't agree with what my company is trying to do, that's OK. We want to know. But what appears to be

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Letters

BENGEYFIELD STEPS DOWN

To the editor:

You and your companions at *Golf Course News* have earned the right to be very proud of your accomplishments. Yours is an exceptional publication and has lived up to the claim, "The Newspaper of The Golf Course Industry." No slick, meaningless, quick-fix articles here which are now so common-place in so many 'turfgrass management' magazines today. *Golf Course News* is alive, refreshing, and in depth. I congratulate and salute all of you!

It has been an honor to have been listed as a member of the Editorial Advisory Board since retirement from the USGA two years ago. It now seems time for me to move on — or at least out of the way — for someone else to serve in this capacity. My great regret is not taking an active part in the publication for I still enjoy writing (when there is time) and reading *Golf Course News*. Would it be possible to remain on your mailing list? That would be very much appreciated.

I thank you for the association

we have had and send best wishes to all for the continued growth and success of *Golf Course News*. The industry needs your kind of news and information. It hasn't had it since the demise of *Golfdom* 15 or 18 years ago. Keep it up.

All The Best!

Wm. H. Bengueyfield

MISPLACED PRIORITIES

To the editor:

I have been a faithful reader of your periodical for several years now. I find that I can learn more from your publication than any other industry journal. However, I will have to take exception with your recent treatment of a particularly important golf course issue in Hawaii, and elsewhere.

On the cover of the May 1992 issue of *Golf Course News*, your staff ran an article by Associate Editor Peter Blais regarding a gentleman named Gen Morita of The Global Network for Anti-Golf Course Action. The article seemed to praise Mr. Morita's efforts to "...obtain moratoriums against new development in 10 of Japan's 46

prefectures." The article went on to describe Mr. Morita's lust for shutting down the golf course development industry in the Hawaiian Islands. Mr. Blais offered little challenge to Mr. Morita's broad sweeping and mostly false indictments of the golf course development industry.

Today, I read but a few very short paragraphs (thanks mostly to your editorial, July 1992) regarding the efforts of Bob Itamoto and Neil Bustamente to counteract the assaults of disinformation before the Hawaii County Council's Planning Committee. There is little doubt in my mind that the issues these gentlemen were addressing were related to the efforts of Mr. Morita and his merry band of environmental dogooders. I am furious that these two golf course superintendents almost got their efforts edited out of your publication, while Mr. Blais gave so much ink to the glorification of a reactionary.

This is not an issue exclusive to the Hawaiian Islands. I hear of this nonsense every day. It is terrifying to realize that someone

thinking that they are doing the "right thing" can go into a Planning Commission meeting armed with only their hysteria and the environmentalists attack handbook can shut down our industry. Your observation was absolutely correct: Without a conscientious effort on the part of all of us in the industry to speak the truth, golf itself could be at risk.

Whereas it is prudent to know one's enemies, we need not glorify them. Equitable and factually honest treatment of Mr. Morita's dog and pony show would have been for Mr. Blais to attend the hearings with the two superintendents and report on their efforts. It is a mistake to print their efforts in a meager six paragraph article on page five, or merely mention them in an editorial. Front page treatment should have been obligatory. *Golf Course News* must always come to the defense of the golf course industry. By the nature of your livelihood, impartiality is not an option.

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