

BRIEFS



MICHIGAN TURF CONFERENCE SET

LANSING, Mich. — The highlight of the 69th Annual Michigan Turfgrass Conference here, Jan. 18-21, will be honoring the retirement of Dr. Paul Rieke of Michigan State University (MSU). Rieke has garnered many honors, including the Distinguished Service Award from the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America in 1996 and the Green Section Award from the U.S. Golf Association in 1997. The conference will be held at the Holiday Inn South — Hotel and Convention Center. For further information contact Kay at 517-321-1660.



Dr. Paul Rieke

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UMASS STARTS FUSARIUM PATCH STUDY

AMHERST, Mass. — Dr. Gail Schumann of the University of Massachusetts is initiating a study to deal with some of the problems with Fusarium patch on golf courses. The study will include timing of fall applications for winter snow mold control, disease prediction during spring and fall outbreaks, and evaluation of fungicide resistance. People wishing to participate should contact Schumann at the Department of Microbiology, Fernald Hall, UMass, Amherst, Mass. 01103-2420; telephone 413-545-3413.



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TEXAS A&M HONORS WATSON

COLLEGE STATION, Texas — Dr. James R. Watson, a long-time leader in the turfgrass industry, has been named an Outstanding Alumnus by Texas A&M University's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. The award was presented at the college's 1998 Faculty Awards Convocation on Sept. 11. Watson, vice president and agronomist for the Toro Co. since 1952, has been praised as a leader in all phases of the turfgrass industry, especially involving irrigation and environmental matters. As an assistant professor of agronomy at Texas A&M prior to joining Toro, Watson is a founder of the International Turfgrass Society, which he served as president one year and director since 1979.



Dr. James Watson

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Mr. Certification: Feltman leads 2nd course in Audubon

By MIKE JAMISON

LONGWOOD, Fla. — Adam Feltman can't remember when he decided to become a golf course superintendent, but he knows exactly where his special relationship with the environment began. It all started, fittingly enough, at church.

"My Dad was a Baptist minister, and I kept up the grounds at the church when I was younger," said the 29-year-old native of Moultrie, Ga. "I really enjoyed that. That's when I found out that maintenance was much more than mowing grass."

Feltman is currently head superintendent at the semi-private The Legacy Club at Alaqua Lakes, a new Tom Fazio design in this Taylor Woodrow Communities development just north of Orlando, which opened Sept. 1.

The Legacy Club at Alaqua Lakes is a registered member of Audubon International's Signature Cooperative Sanctuary Program, and Feltman expects full certification soon. That means, among other things, that the developer spent approximately \$150,000 extra on construction and man hours to take special care of the natural environment. Audubon International has established enough standards and requirements to fill a pair of one-inch spiral notebooks, and the work, which starts at the very beginning of development, is monitored monthly throughout the life of the project.

Although Feltman is only seven years



Photos by Jerry White Photography



Environmental areas are everywhere at The Legacy Club at Alaqua Lakes, including along the 17th hole.

into his career, he has been the head superintendent at two of the first nine golf courses worldwide to achieve the Signature status. Prior to The Legacy Club, he was head superintendent at Champions Club, a Signature status club in south Florida.

Why go to that kind of expense and trouble?

"Obviously there is the benefit of doing the right thing for the environment," said Feltman, who majored in agronomy at the University of Georgia. "We also did it because of the recognition of being one of the top-notch semi-private facilities in the country. This goes hand-in-hand."

Sarasota-based Taylor Woodrow Communities gave Fazio plenty of land on

which to work, allowing ample natural buffer between fairways and homesites. As a result, two positive golf course qualities were born. Each hole became its own stage. On only one place in the routing is one hole completely visible from another. Nos. 9 and 18 share a tee, a lake and a stand of trees as they deliver golfers toward the clubhouse. The other holes are all framed by oaks and pines, wetlands and other natural areas.

Therein lies the second positive result of the land planning. The natural habitat, which includes 158 acres of wetlands, was left basically untouched. It's one of the many reasons why The Legacy Club met stringent Audubon standards for Sig-

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Retiring circumstances for two famed supers

Dan Jones resigns his post in Florida for job as regional sales rep, while...

... Bob Mitchell leaves The Greenbriar, eyeing retirement and turf consultancy

By MARK LESLIE

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. — Golf course superintendents, especially in the South, are on "a collision course" with job pressures — pressures that are forcing them beyond their own personal capabilities, and pushing their turfgrass beyond its ability to survive.

That is the assessment of Dan Jones, who after 33 years has retired as a superintendent in Florida, where he once served as president of the Florida Turfgrass Association and South Florida Golf Course Superintendents Association (GCSA).

"The pressure on superintendents is getting more and more every day," said Jones, who has left Banyan Golf Club here after 18 years of service to take on a position as sales representative for Toro Co.'s Liquid Ag Systems Inc. in Florida. "It's like a locomotive gaining steam all the time. It has to be lower cuts, no weeds, perfect conditions, like Augusta National every day."

"Our job has gotten much more volatile in the last few years," he added. "Twenty-five or 30 years ago, we used to do our jobs,

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By MARK LESLIE

LEWISBURG, W. Va. — The world of CPAs never did get him. Now the world of golf course superintendents has lost him from its "active" roles after 48 years. Bob Mitchell, longtime executive director of grounds at The Greenbriar hotel and resort here and 1972 president of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA), has retired from his post.

"I had a real good life in golf course superintendency. I don't regret a nickel's worth," said Mitchell. "I had bad times. All superintendents do. When my grass is good, I feel great. When it's sick, I am, too. It keeps you around seven days a week all season long, but I still like it. Now I'm glad it has drawn to a close, and I hope I can help people."

To that end, Mitchell will work out of his home as a turfgrass consultant, doing business as RVM Enterprises.

Growing up working on golf courses as the son and grandson of golf superintendents, Mitchell nevertheless wanted to be a CPA like his uncle, whom he idolized. Yet, it was his other idol, Arnold Palmer, whose career path he most closely followed. Attending Southern Illinois University as a business student, he received a golf scholarship as the team's No. 1 player his final year. And when he graduated, he remained in golf as a superintendent, putting to use the experience he had gained working for his father at Franklin County Country Club in West Frankfort, Ill.

His first job, in 1950, was for the town of Alton, Ill., maintaining its nine-hole public course and ball diamonds, and later

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Dan Jones, left, receives an editorial award from Clay Loyd of the Golf Course Superintendents Association for Florida Green magazine.



Bob Mitchell

Mitchell retires from Greenbriar

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another nine-hole facility. In 1958 he left for a 12-year stint at Sunset Country Club in St. Louis. It was here that he and other colleagues started the Missouri Valley Golf Course Superintendents Association and the Missouri Valley Turfgrass Association, both of which he served as president. He also served a term as president of the Midwest Regional Turfgrass Foundation, which is centered around Purdue University.

Becoming active in the national GCSAA and elected as an officer in 1967, Mitchell moved to the influential Portage Country Club in Akron, Ohio, in 1971, and a year later became president of the GCSAA. It was, as past president in 1973, when he was preparing to captain the GCSAA golf team against their British and Scottish counterparts, that The Greenbriar came calling to persuade him to join them in bringing back life to the Old White Course, and later rebuilding The Greenbriar and Lakeside (now Meadows) tracks.

"The Greenbriar," Mitchell said, "is staggering. The job got bigger and bigger, and today it's quite huge."

Besides the three courses, the property includes 60 to 70 acres around the hotel and a number of homes, and the grounds crew is responsible for landscaping all of it. Mitchell employs 31 on his golf course maintenance crew and 29 on his grounds unit.

With Jack Nicklaus as the architect, The Greenbriar was rebuilt in 1976 for the 1979 Ryder Cup. "And almost every year the first 10 or 12 years they added buildings at the hotel and landscaping had to be done for each one of them," Mitchell recalled. "We doubled greenhouse space and added so much landscaping that it is utterly staggering."

In 1984 Mitchell was made executive director of golf and grounds, a position he held until Robert Harris was hired as director of golf, and Mitchell could devote full time to his true love.

"The job has gotten more strenuous," he acknowledged. "But the camaraderie of superintendents hasn't changed. I've never seen more friendly and helpful people."

"I've seen [an evolution to] more dedicated people in taking care of golf courses, doing a better job financially, getting paid better, too, and spending money more wisely. The tenacity with which they have gotten down together for golf is fantastic."

Mitchell said the demand for lower-cut greens and disease-resistant grasses has not always started with the golfer, but often with the superintendent.

"The superintendent wants

something better to maintain — not easier, but better," he said. "We don't make grass grow, God does that. But we are taking a plant out of its natural environment and doing things to it to make it good for golf. When you do things like that you have to make all kinds of concessions and do whatever is pos-

sible to make it live."

Over the years, Mitchell has been recognized for his contributions to the profession. He received the 1995 Scotts Tradition of Excellence Award, established by The Scotts Co. to recognize "outstanding achievements among superintendents in advancing the science of course maintenance and in making golf the best it can be."

Asked if he had any advice for turfgrass students entering the field, Mitchell said: "I've always preferred country clubs over public courses. By and large you're under the gun more and stress is higher. But you are more appreciated. At the public course you're just one of them. Golfers don't have the same appreciation, it appears to me, although I enjoyed that part of my life."

DESERT GREEN CONCLAVE SET

HENDERSON, Nev. — Desert Green, a two-day conference focusing on the challenges faced by turf and landscape professionals in the arid Southwest, has been set for Nov. 12-13 at Henderson Convention Center. For more information call Bob Morris or M.L. Robinson at the Cooperative Extension at 702-222-3130.

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Jones leaves Banyon GC

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visit each other, and it was fun. The fun is going out of it now. The pressure is tremendous, and something has to give."

Burnout, Jones said, has become an increasing danger among superintendents. "I see even young superintendents getting burned out," he said. "I talk to superintendents in their 30s who say they won't last another five years."

The pressures for high maintenance, especially in the South, have increased to the breaking point in many instances, he said, adding: "Either you're preparing for overseeding, or you just finished overseeding, you're in transition, or have summer programs going on, or it's at the height of the winter season and all your members are here. The pressure is there all the time — one type of pressure after another."

The phenomenon, he said, began to take form 20 years ago and has skyrocketed in the last 10.

The demand for lower and lower-cut greens, the Augusta National manicured look seen on television, and high-tech equipment have all driven the locomotive faster, Jones said. "And now they're making titanium bedknives that can cut at .95 (1.25 equals 1/8 inch)."

"We're [superintendents] our own worst enemy," he acknowledged. "Manufacturers won't make anything we won't use. And, naturally, if we keep making the greens faster and faster, and practices like that, they are going to keep bringing out equipment that will give us what we want."

The pressure, Jones added, is driving superintendents from the profession and, in many cases, costing them their jobs.

Ninety percent of commercial salesmen in Southeast Florida, he said, are ex-superintendents, whereas years ago few were superintendents.

"Good superintendents," he said, "will try to give their members what they want, but it's killing them. They are being driven into the ground to produce more and more."

Jones said he recently visited a golf course that was "immaculate." Yet, the superintendent shortly thereafter was told to start looking for a job because members "had found a weed patch and thought the house-keeping was terrible," Jones said. "But it looked to me like he was ready for the U.S. Open. That's the kind of pressure superintendents are under now."

Jones's recommendation to superintendents?

"Go to a resort or public course," he said. "At a resort, they're happy just to have green grass. At Dorado Beach in St. Croix people come and play for a week and are happy."

His recommendation to the industry?

"I would say that golf is a game to be enjoyed. You can have as

much fun, and probably more, putting on a green cut at 5/32nds as you can at 0.95, and on fairways cut at 5/8 instead of 3/8 inch. You can have a beautiful green golf course, enjoy it and still play the game great, too. Bobby Jones and Ben Hogan played on

We need to get back to basics again, grow healthy grass, let people enjoy doing their job and let golfers enjoy playing the golf course as it is.'

— Dan Jones

greens that we 'shaved' down to 3/16 inch and broke all kinds of records.

"The pendulum needs to swing back. We need to get back to basics again, grow healthy grass, let people enjoy doing their job and let golfers enjoy

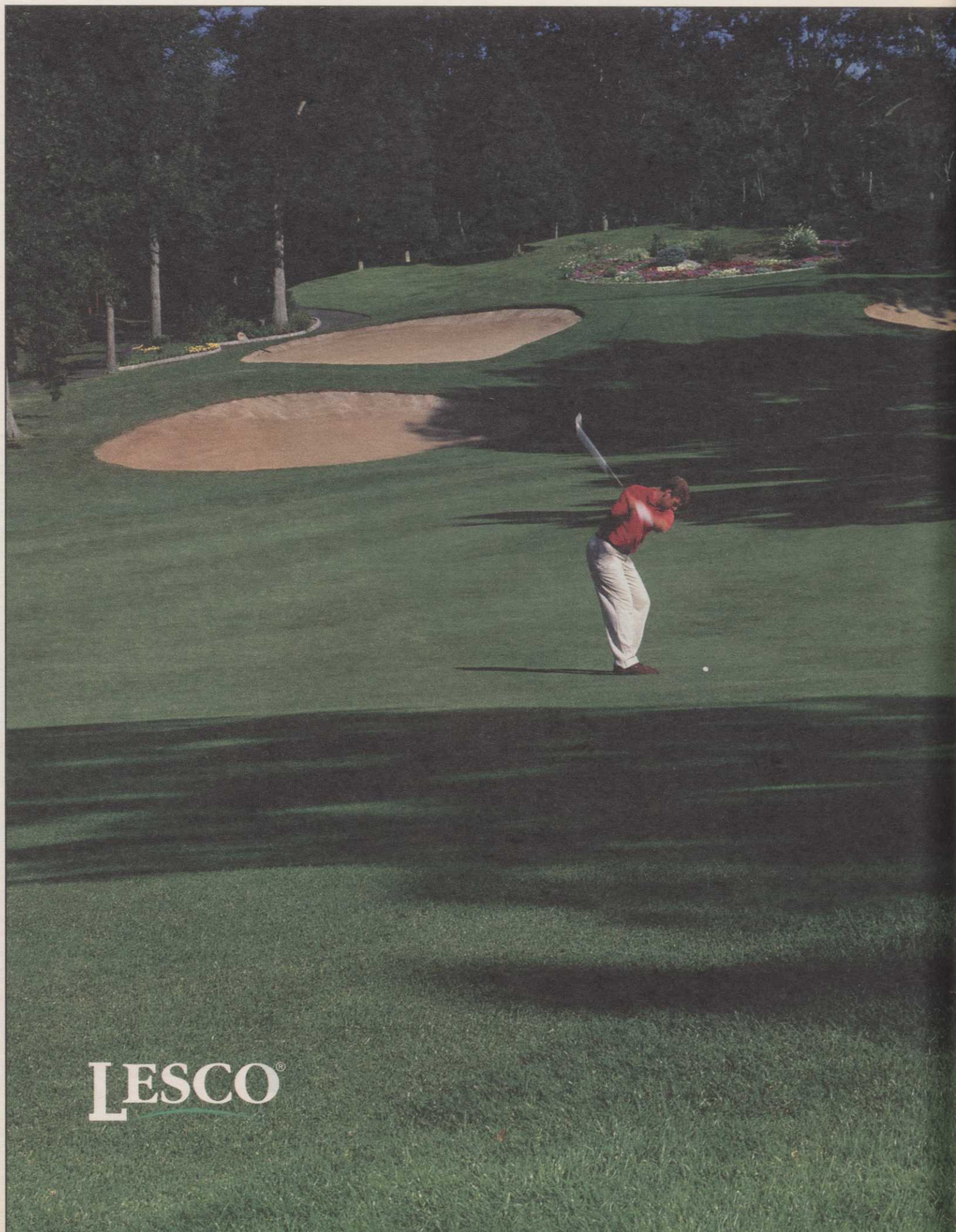
playing the golf course as it is."

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In the meantime, the profession is losing one of its best, according to colleagues.

"Dan is the consummate golf course superintendent," said Tim Hiers of Collier's Reserve in Naples. "I think as highly of him as anyone in the business. He's everything you would look for in a citizen, a superintendent, a pro-

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Westmoreland Country Club turf equipment technician Al Bitterman shows off his racing lawnmower, which powered him to national runner-up in the U.S. Lawnmower Racing Association's season-ending points race.



Westmoreland's Bitterman Gets Honors

ROCKFORD, Ill. — Al Bitterman of Lake Zurich, Ill., a turf equipment technician at Westmoreland Country Club in Wilmette, Ill., finished the season in second place in points after the running of the Sta-Bil Nationals, a championship race for riding lawn mowers held at the Rockford Metrocentre here.

Bob Cleveland of Locust

Grove, Ga., a designer for Snapper, won the championship race to lock up first place in the national points race. The field of 14 lawn mowers reached speeds exceeding 45 miles per hour. The races are sponsored by the Gold Eagle Co., makers of Sta-Bil Fuel Stabilizer, with proceeds benefiting the Les Turner ALS Foundation for Lou Gehrig's Disease.

MAINTENANCE

ARKANSAS TURF SHOW IN JAN.

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. — The Arkansas Turfgrass Association will host its 11th Annual Conference and Trade Show, Jan. 11-12, here at the Arkansas Statehouse Convention Center and the Arkansas' Excelsior Hotel. Contact Angie McSwain at 501-664-8048, or write to Arkansas Turfgrass Association, P.O. Box 250270, Little Rock, Ark. 72225-0270.

Jones leaves

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fessional.

"He is always willing to share his time and help others. Whether personal or business, he was there. He's a mentor to a lot of people, including me."

Jones, who earned certified golf course superintendent status despite never attending a university turf school, is well-known nationally for taking the Florida GCSA's Florida Green magazine from a four-page issue in 1976 to a perennial national award-winner when he left as editor in 1990. Working with wife Irene, his last issue of the quarterly publication was a 96-pager.

Jones began his career as superintendent at Fountain Valley Golf Course (now Carambola Bay) in St. Croix, Virgin Islands. He worked there for the Rockresorts, Inc.-owned facility for five years, then worked for Rockresorts in Puerto Rico. There, he oversaw two golf courses at Dorado Beach Hotel, and was owner's representative in building two 18-hole courses at Cerromar Beach Hotel. He was director of facilities maintenance, in charge of the golf courses, hotels and grounds, from 1970-75.

"It was like being a city manager," he said. "I had 210 employees. We operated all the grounds and hotel maintenance had 210 employees. The facility had its own sewage plant and miles of roads."

After five years in Puerto Rico, Jones took a position at Turnberry Isles in Miami Beach, where he remained another five years until joining Banyon Golf Club.

He has served on advisory boards at Broward Community College in Ft. Lauderdale and Lake City Community College in Florida.

His new job?

"Now I get around to see golf courses and superintendents — hold their hand," he laughed. "Hopefully in 33 years I have gained some insight. I'll sell fertilizer, but mainly I'm there to help them, and I'll do whatever I can do make their jobs easier."

Jones is working out of his home at 8346 7th Place South, West Palm Beach, Fla. 33411; telephone 561-793-2497.

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