

## Facts, figures, interviews and Public Golf Forum

I gotta call a couple days ago from a reporter on a Virgin Islands' newspaper who was writing a travel story for islanders who were dying to get out and see the Upper 48.

"If you were to plan your ideal golf vacation in the States, what would you do?"

"Well, I'd round up the usual suspects, rent a Winnebago, tap a keg of ice cold beer and head for Michigan for two solid weeks of public golf mayhem," I said, thinking, for just a moment, that I may have been a tad too frank with her.

There was a slight pause. "Michigan?"

"Yes," I said. "Michigan."

She obviously hadn't seen a the most recent copy of the National Golf Foundation's (NFG) Trends in the Golf Industry report — I took a wild guess that she hadn't seen any them.

"Let's talk East North Central golf," I said in NGF-speak to sound like I knew what I'm talking about. "Of the nine regions in the United States, the East North Central [ENC] had the highest percentage [79 percent] of public golf courses relative to total courses. The ENC also has the highest number of public courses [2,639] and accounts for 23 percent of the nation's supply of public golf. You could go for, I don't know, two months, I guess. That is if you have the time to do Illinois, Ohio and Wisconsin too. Now there's a trip," I added enthusiastically.

There was a long, uncomfortable pause. I thought I'd lost her.

"A hu...", she said. I heard her fingers flying across her keyboard. I thought she might like to get the phone numbers for the NGF to get the facts from the appropriate source. She kept typing and I dove in to get a laugh.

"I'd suggest to your readers that they drink the beer only after a round and when the Winnebago has been parked and secured at a registered camp site," I added, but there wasn't anything in the way of even a chuckle. Instead I heard her fingers continue to punch out words.

"Okay Mr. Levans. Thanks very much indeed." Our conversation came to an abrupt close.

The facts and figures continue to astound and amaze. Public golf is king, the ENC (Michigan, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana and Ohio region) continues to lead the way with 3,332 total courses (21 percent of the nation's golf course supply) and player participation figures are finally growing. There has simply never been a better time to be in this business.

If you're in this business, which I know you are, I'd grab a copy of the NGF's latest trend report. The report may make you wonder how long all this can carry on. Although the number of total golfers over the age of 12 increased by a little over 2 million from 1996, the biggest move in six years, one would think that we're going to have to see more impressive numbers than that over the next three to four years if we're going to fill the more than 930 courses that are currently under construction.

Oh, by the way, if you want to take advantage of this information and successfully steer your public-access course in the proper direction, well, you *must* attend Public Golf Forum. Turn to pages 16 and 39 for more info.



Michael Levans,  
editor

## With objectivity in question, readers must beware of the "subversive"

*Bayer Beware!* is a term that can be translated into many languages — like the languages of golfers (*Slicer Beware!*), superintendents (*Snow Mold Beware!*) golf course builders (*Underground Boulders Beware!*).

But the warning that can affect us all is *Reader Beware!* With some writers, especially today, we really have to be on our toes.

To give you some insight into the modern media, read this statement: "Instead of objectivity, which forces reporters to be the mouthpieces of the powerful, citizens need journalistic perspective."

I tell you, this is not a joke. Reported in *Washington Journalism Review*, it came from the mouth of one Deni Elliot, an "ethicist" and former television newscaster who is a professor of ethics and director at the University of Montana's Practical Ethics Center.

Get this now: This person is teaching future news reporters and newscasters, whose "news" reports you will be hearing and reading, but hopefully not always believing. Future reporters, at least in Montana, are being told by the likes of Elliot to be "objective" conduits but serve an "active role brimming with professional perspective."

Try dividing truth and fallacy from that call to duty.

This reminds me of other blatant remarks unveiling bias of reporters.

My old-time favorite is from *Boston Globe* environmental reporter Dianne Dumanoski, who said more than once: "There is no such thing as objective reporting... I've become even more crafty about finding voices to say the things I think are true. That's my subversive mission."

If you have a pulse, you know that distortion of fact and disregard for truth are key ingredients in some media.

So, when you tune in or read on, *Beware the Conduit!* — especially you folks in Montana and Massachusetts.

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Portraits of Courage (or is that Foolishness?):

- Mowing greens in Texas — in August — without sun screen.
- Proceeding with construction on a fairway assuming that that 2-foot "puddle" in the landing area is not a wetland.
- Selecting a turfgrass cultivar for your new golf course based solely on the experience of a superintendent just 5 miles down the road.
- Dumping a cooler of Gatorade on John Daly after he wins a tournament.
- Playing PGA West without one of those long-armed ball-pickers.
- Playing from the tiger tees while your strapping 17-year-old son plays from the forward tees — for \$5 a hole.
- Stepping to the 7th tee at Pebble Beach having already selected a 9-iron.
- Sporting a "Perot '92" bumper sticker on your car in 1998.
- Deciding you can operate your golf course at its highest level of profit **without** attending *Golf Course News'* Public Golf Forum in Palm Springs, Calif., Oct. 26-27.
- Assuming you can plug your own conference without catching flak as a flak.

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If the Brits are coming to America (*see page 1 story*), can the Scotsmen be far behind? Maybe yes, maybe no. There seems to be a dearth of architects in golf's homeland. Look at the membership list of the British Institute of Golf Course Architects and you will find

nary a one in Scotland. David McLay Kidd, director of golf design for Gleneagles Golf Development (GGD), is located in Scotland, as are designers Ronnie Lumsden and Robin Hiseman.

This, dear friend, is the home of Old Tom Morris, of Donald Ross, of Willie Park Jr., of Willie Watson, of Willie Campbell, and of Tom Bendelow. Perhaps we could put a call into Walter Woods, the old-time greenskeeper at St. Andrews who retired a couple years ago. Do you have your finger on the dial, Terry Buchen?

plant-protectant chemicals needed to grow a paper supply, *Audubon* magazine might not exist. Then again, without farmers using fertilizers, water and plant-protectant chemicals, those editors of the *Audubon* magazine might not eat.

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### LETTER TO THE EDITOR

## Has Audubon gone too far?

Having read with interest and agreement your editorial "How green are these greens?!" in this month's [September] issue of *GCN*, the National Audubon Society has now gone too far.

I cannot recall anyone telling me it is the responsibility of the National Audubon Society to rank golf courses as to the amount of water use

and/or plant protectant chemical applications. I'm sure you will find this mission not even remotely mentioned in their by-laws. Besides, what is their expertise in these matters? Then to add the disclaimer about opinions expressed by authors as not official is another joke. The magazine printed their opinions, didn't it?

Without fertilizer, water and