

A changing of the guard

By JOHN LAFOY, ASGCA

With all the talk out there about the coming Millennium, it's great that *Golf Course News* isn't overlooking its 10-year anniversary.

So when Mike Levans asked me pen this column and reflect on the past decade, I gladly accepted. And I figured an appropriate place to start would be in digging out the minutes from 10 years ago when the American Society of Golf Course Architects held its 43rd annual meeting in Pinehurst.

Surprise, surprise: The main topic of discussion in 1989 was — by a long shot — the environment. Then-President Pete Dye detailed his work at Old Marsh Country Club, which employed an innovative series of drainage, pumps, and irrigation to prevent

the course's water supply from getting back into the marshlands that surround the layout.

Incoming president Bobby Jones presented a case history on his firm's work at Spanish Bay, which required a cooperative approach with state agencies to restore its California site to its natural sand dunes. Interestingly enough, Old Marsh and Spanish Bay remain as beacons of environmental stewardship.

Past President Mike Hurdzan spoke of the importance of having solid environmental research on hand when obtaining the permits for projects, since regulatory commissions would be "taking a more active look at golf courses in the future."

And other industry experts jumped in on the act as well. The USGA Green Section detailed the environmental research that his organization was conducting while an environmental re-

searcher provided the latest on groundwater quality at golf courses.

Flash forward 10 years. We're not out of the woods yet. But we've made a lot of progress in communicating golf's environmental record.

The EPA has labeled golf a "model industry" and even published a poster promoting the environmental benefits of golf courses. The general public increasingly recognizes that golf courses that are properly designed, constructed and maintained are an asset to Mother Nature.

At the Society's 1999 Annual Meeting where I took the reigns as President, we discussed the need to remain vigilant on the environment through measures such as the recent publishing of our second edition of "An Environmental Approach to Golf Course Development." But even as we do this, it was obvious that another issue continues to take center stage: Providing affordable and accessible golf facilities.

Can we grow enough new

players to sustain the prosperity of the game?

We hope so. Many society members have for some time been working to do their part in the communities in which they work and live. In my hometown of Greenville, S.C., I designed a little par-3 facility a few years ago that continues to be popular with beginners today. I know many ASGCA architects who have done the same.

And I am proud of the dozens ASGCA members who have stepped forward to assist with the projects of The First Tee, as this initiative works to welcome new players all over the country.

My predecessors in the ASGCA presidency have discussed this subject for some time now. In 1996, Denis Griffiths made the need for "affordable and accessible" golf courses the drumbeat of his

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presidency. In 1997, Alice Dye sat in Central Park as The First Tee was introduced to the world. In 1998, Bob Lohmann urged ASGCA members to persuade their clients to create learning facilities in conjunction with their designs.

Now in 1999, I hope that through our continued support of The First Tee and the individual efforts of the Society's 140 member architects, I can help the golf industry meet its next great challenge: That of broadening our reach to the next generation of players.

Lets hope that in the year 2009, as *Golf Course News* celebrates its 20th anniversary, our industry can boast of its success in this area.

In the meantime, take a bow, *Golf Course News*, for a decade of service to the industry.



John LaFoy, ASGCA president

John LaFoy is President of the American Society of Golf Course Architects.

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