

TRAVELS WITH JONESY

I use Facebook posts as a travelogue of the weird and wonderful things I see and do in my job. My life is a little like Johnny Cash's, "I've Been Everywhere," except my list of destinations is longer and stranger. Why the hell do I subject myself to endless trudges through TSA security and schlepping golf clubs across three time zones? Because this is a people-driven, relationship-driven business and I LEARN every time I go somewhere. Here are a few highlights from recent trips.

Syngenta did a power-launch for two brand-spanking new fungicides – Briskway and Secure – at the fabulous Pinehurst Resort a few weeks ago. It was awesome. I got to spend time with a good friend, Pinehurst's Bob Farren, and Kevin Robinson, the man who's stewarding the new, improved version of the #2 course toward the 2014 U.S. Open and Women's Open. I liked the old #2...I'm absolutely gobsmacked by the new version. I've said it before: the notion of "rebranding" a golf course like #2 which had become Augusta-ized over the years is sheer, bloody genius.

But, as nice as it was to catch up with Bob and Kevin, I also spent some real time with key Syngenta senior executives, all of whom were smiling like the cat who ate the canary because they knew they were about to acquire DuPont's insecticide products. Part of the event involved them performing routine maintenance tasks around the course while we rotated around to talk with them. A little cutesy, but the point was that Syngenta is trying to get beyond simply providing chemistry and look at the big picture of how things get done on golf courses and how they can be more responsive with products, support and services.

Sound like corporate hokum? It's not. The company is broadening the commitment they started with the Syngenta Business Institute and the EcoMeasures tool because they genuinely want to change their business model to get beyond jugs and bags. They're serious about it. Keep watching them...there's a reason they were one of GCI's top "Most Admired" companies last year.

Another of my trips took me to Waukegan,

Ill., the global HQ of Precision Laboratories. I'd be shocked if too many of you didn't know about Cascade, Sync or their other surfactants and adjuvants, but you might be like me and not know a helluva lot about a company that's been around for 50 years.

Rick Wohlner and his team are passionate about their products, absolutely buttoned-down as businesspeople and totally committed to our market. They talk to customers as much as any manufacturer I know. They see a future where superintendents will come to rely as much on adjuvants for tank-mixing as big farmers do. The proof is in the pudding and they can prove that these products can boost to the efficacy of anything you apply.

Next, I was off to Phoenix to talk to the Marriott/Ritz-Carlton golf team. Short version: they get it. They understand better than nearly any group how important it is for superintendents to be on top of the business side as much as the agronomics.

From there, it was off to St. Augustine for the GCBAA Summer Meeting. Again, short version: I love a meeting where everyone attending is engaged and almost all at-

tendees have relationships that span decades. Executive Director Justin Apel and his team put on a first-class event, too. The GCBAA used to be a larger Army. Now, they're a smaller, more tight-knit and focused Marine Corps.

There were other trips and observations, but I'd be remiss if I didn't mention two very important citizens of our community who we lost recently.

Gregg Breningmeyer was my client, my friend, my smoking buddy and my golf partner for a decade. He was the visible, vocal and incredibly passionate leader of Deere Golf. You absolutely knew that Gregg's word was his bond. He adored his business and he loved superintendents. I don't read auras or any of that stuff, but there was simply an electricity around Gregg. He burned brightly and our world is a little dimmer without him.

And then there was Stan Zontek. I invite you to join me on the back page of this issue to talk about my friend of 25 years and what he meant to all of us. **GCI**



Pat Jones

Editorial director and publisher

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GIE Media, Inc.

4020 Kinross Lakes Pkwy, 2nd floor

Richfield, OH 44286

Phone: 800-456-0707

Fax: 330-659-0823

EDITORIAL

Pat Jones

Publisher/Editorial director
pjones@gie.net

Mike Zawacki

Editor
mzawacki@gie.net

Kyle Brown

Associate Editor
kbrown@gie.net

Bruce Williams

Senior contributing editor

SALES

Russell Warner
National account manager
330-523-5385

Martha Corfman
Manager, books
330-523-5366

Ted Schuld
Account manager
216-236-5937

Maria Miller
Conferences manager
330-523-5373

Bonnie Velikonya
Classified sales
330-523-5322

Jodi Shipley
Marketing coordinator
330-523-5368

GRAPHICS / PRODUCTION

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