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Paul Jett, CGCS, Superintendent
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- Bob Farren, CGCS, Golf Course and Grounds Manager



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pictured from left to right:
Bob Farren, CGCS, Golf Course and Grounds Manager
Paul Jett, CGCS, Superintendent Pinehurst No. 2

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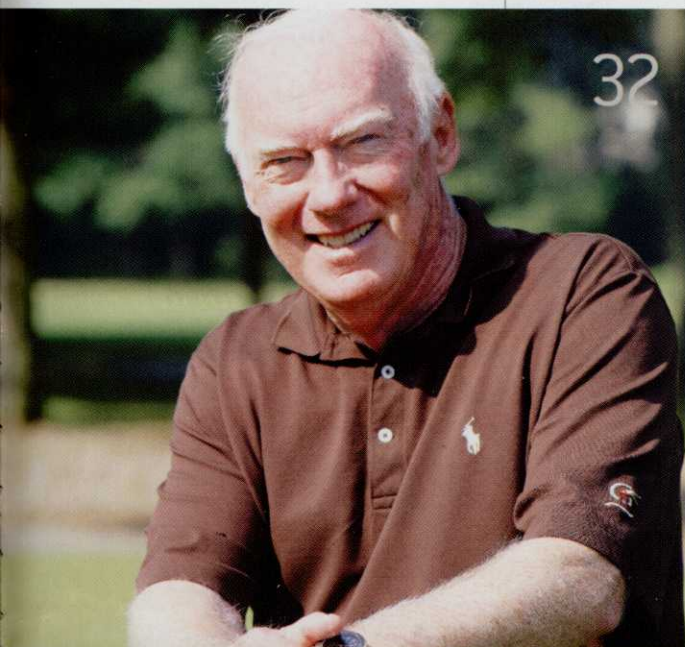
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Photo: Darren Carroll/Golf Digest

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EDITORIAL MISSION STATEMENT:

Golf Course Industry reports on and analyzes the business of maintaining golf courses, as well as the broader business of golf course management. This includes three main areas: agronomy, business management and career development as it relates to golf course superintendents and those managers responsible for maintaining a golf course as an important asset. Golf Course Industry shows superintendents what's possible, helps them understand why it's important and tells them how to take the next step.





John Walsh
Editor

THE NEXT GENERATION

In politics, issues are framed frequently in terms of what life is going to be like for our grandchildren and their children. What condition are we going to leave the earth in? How much debt will the country have generations from now? Politicians use the feel-good image of children to push policies they want to implement now. Genuine or not, politicians say they're concerned about future generations.

What's more genuine is the golf course maintenance industry's concern for its future. Turfgrass professors, superintendents and manufacturers invest a lot of time, effort and money to educate turfgrass students and young assistants about the business of golf course management. The goal is simple: continue to elevate the profession and industry and see them thrive in the future.

Two examples of support for the industry's future come to mind: Jacobsen's Future Turf Managers Seminar and Bayer Environmental Science's and John Deere's Green Start Academy. These companies understand the value of investing in young people because students and assistants will be their customers and leaders of tomorrow.

It's remarkable to see the enthusiasm and determination of these students and assistants who seem to have clear career paths mapped out in their heads. They thirst for knowledge and soak up every bit of information superintendents, suppliers and professors impart. It's marvelous to see them dissecting the information presented to them and forming opinions and theories.

One consistent message superintendents convey to students and assistants at these events is success in the industry doesn't come quickly or easily. It requires personal sacrifice and takes more time than it did a generation ago. At first, this message might seem depressing, but the best and brightest among the attendees seem to understand and accept the challenges laid before them. They don't balk at the difficult path they face because they're intelligent, hard-working people who are determined to succeed.

Events such as these might be just as important to a young person's future as any course of study or internship. Students and assistants network with peers and mentors alike to build relationships that will help them advance their careers. Armed with information, advice and relationships, students and assistants can weave a path of success more easily than those without these experiences.

As superintendents, it's part of your job to be mentors to students and assistants so they'll be prepared to lead the industry when the time comes. Hopefully, you have an active internship program in which you're influencing the lives and careers of future superintendents. Think about your career and the decisions you've made, about the things you would've done differently. Share these experiences with students and assistants. Contribute to their education outside the classroom. Make them the best they can be by imparting your wisdom.

If you're a manufacturer who isn't involved with a program for mentoring and educating students and assistants, think about starting one. There are plenty of quality students and assistants who are worth the investment.

Professors and universities should be marketing to and encouraging graduates to think about continuing their education to become the next generation of professors. Someone has to teach future turfgrass students once this generation of professors retires. Besides, not every turfgrass graduate will become a superintendent.

The industry does an estimable job of investing in its future and should be proud of its efforts. Even with taut budgets, it should continue to do so. **GCI**

We would like to hear from you. Please post any comments you have about this column on our message board, which is at www.golfcourseindustry.com/messageboard.



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Environment spotlight

Thanks for the recent article "On the greener side" in *Golf Course Industry* (March, page 42). I know it means a great deal to our members to be highlighted for their dedication and hard work. Pat Blum at Colonial Acres, Tim Powers at Crystal Springs, Dave Phipps at Stone Creek, and Drew Cummins at Red Tail Golf Club deserve to be in the limelight. Thanks for keeping the good work of environmental stewards at the forefront of your readers.

Jean Mackay

Director of education and communications
Audubon International
Selkirk, N.Y.

Good pay

After reading Jim McLoughlin's "Club management options" column (March, page 26), I'm not sure I agree entirely with his premise that contract management doesn't attract the better superintendents or pay well.

I've been working with the top agronomic officers from the nation's largest multicourse companies for several years. I haven't met many brighter, better paid, more confident superintendent leaders in other golf circles. These guys/gals aren't visible in GCSAA activities or outside their companies because they're too busy, but they're terrific agronomically and as business people. They have a good handle on the return on investment of everything they're doing on the golf course. They're not just spenders but recognize they and their teammates have to have ownership of the bottom line of club operations. The superintendents of these companies are learning it doesn't always make sense to improve maintenance conditions beyond what's economically sensible. I'm not sure that's easily learned.

So, perhaps at the lowest level of these corporations, superintendents aren't necessarily the highest earners, but most of the multicourse company c.e.o.s will let you know superintendents are their most valuable commodity, and they're paying them well. Most importantly, one can move up the ladder if he/she is good and wishes to move up without the trauma of having to find a new employer.

The happy medium between the committee system, general manager system and contract maintenance is golf course maintenance contracting managed by a strong general manager.

This brings all parties back into the game, yet lends expertise to an area not well understood by most g.m.s or club committees.

Ted Horton, CGCS, CIA

Ted Horton Consulting
Canyon Lake, Calif.

Association politics

Jim McLoughlin's column ("A two-year presidency," April, page 24) makes too much sense. For years, I've asked why GCSAA members are funding travel expenses for the board. Superintendents fight for every penny and justify their spending down to the dwindling dollar. Steve Mona is the figurehead of the association and has done an amazing job in his tenure. However, he's a paid employee of the GCSAA and should attend those functions as our c.e.o. and lobbyist in the field. The trips for the board, and sometimes their spouses, seem fiscally extreme. This is one of several reasons why some superintendents won't join the association. They might have a valid point. This isn't a completely outrageous perk considering the amount of time board members spend away from their jobs and families. Unfortunately, in this day and age, perception is reality.

Also, look at the committees. The GCSAA tells the "no name" superintendents, in the interest of having better representation, they can be on a committee only every other year at the most. That's fair, and I, as many, have accepted that. What isn't consistent is when a high-profile superintendent is allowed to stay on a committee year after year with no rotation off unless he asks not to be added. I make a logical plea to the GCSAA management team that the high-profile superintendent is no better than the superintendent at a nine-hole course in Anytown, USA, who works his ass to the bone on a small budget and has to be creative and imaginative on his own. Because this type of superintendent is using his head and instincts for survival not publicity, he might have better ideas for the middle-of-the-road guys that aren't in same monetary league as the big clubs. Every superintendent deserves any accolades he/she gets because of all the monsters, real or imaginative, they face daily.

Joseph Hubbard, CGCS

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A job well done



The clubhouse at Oakmont (Pa.) Country Club.
Photo: John Walsh

All the prep work has long been finished and the media spotlight no longer shines on Oakmont (Pa.) Country Club. After hosting the U.S. Open for the eighth time, the course is healing and members are back to playing on their 104-year-old course.

John Zimmers, the club's grounds superintendent, is back to his staff of about 40. During the week of the U.S. Open, he had about 160 volunteers help him and his staff prepare and maintain the course. Volunteers included golf course superintendents, assistant superintendents (including all of Zimmers' former assistants), friends of Zimmers and vendors.

Zimmers, who has been at the club eight years, plotted the work for everyone on a spreadsheet to determine how many people he needed to work on the course. For example, Zimmers figured he needed 20 people on bunker

detail on both the front and back nine because there are 210 bunkers on the course.

Paul R. Latshaw, a mentor to Zimmers, was one of the volunteers on hand to help.

"He spent a lot of time here," Zimmers says. "He was there for support and at times would do inspections and give advice if I was tied up. He followed up on things for me. He helped more with the agronomic aspect of things. He asked me what I thought we needed to do to get where we needed to be. Most of the time you know the answer, but it's nice to ask someone who's been through it before."

Ninety-nine percent of the volunteers arrived the Sunday afternoon before the Open, Zimmers says. He and the volunteers reviewed everything to make sure everyone's role was understood. Then, that evening, they went out on the course to practice.

"You try and put people you know in certain spots," he says. "You get people from all over the world who want to come and volunteer, but you can't accommodate everybody. It's important that people know what I expect and accept and how I operate. Volunteers could be very good superintendents elsewhere, yet I might have to ask them to redo something, such as rake a bunker, mow a fairway, fill a divot, straighten a tee, because it wasn't what I wanted. Generally, it's because we see something we can do better. We ask volunteers to do a better job and not take it personally."

Volunteering isn't necessarily a glamorous job. Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday before the Open, some volunteers just pushed rotary mowers all day.

"Volunteers do whatever you ask them to do," Zimmers says. "Volunteering is great exposure for them."