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**Pat Jones** is president of Flagstick LLC, a consulting firm that provides sales and marketing intelligence to green industry businesses. He can be reached at psjhawk@cox.net or 440-478-4763.

## THE FUTURE IS NOW

**SNOBSVILLE, N.J. – JULY 15, 2508** – Scientists at the Institute for Studying Silly Stuff Using Huge Government Grants announced a major archeological find: ancient American sites called country clubs.

According to experts, country clubs were social and recreational gathering places similar to modern family virtual-reality fun centers, designed to give wealthy 20th-century Americans a place to play golf – as well as a now defunct game known as tennis – drink copious quantities of alcohol and generally have poorly paid workers serve at their beck and call.

“As ridiculous as it sounds, these country clubs were places where men would physically meet to play golf, drink beer and smoke cigars, while women played a game called bridge with these little paper cards and drank pink-colored cocktails,” said Inga Johanson, Ph.D., the institute’s director. “This was long before holographic projections replaced face-to-face personal contact. It seems quaint today, but people used to actually leave their homes to engage in recreation and business.”

Remarkably, golf courses of the day used real living grass on fairways and greens.

“It was an incredible waste of aqua-water to keep these things alive,” said Tiger Woods the XIX, a noted golf historian and descendant of a moderately successful player of the era. “Can you imagine actually using millions of gallons of aqua-water – which we now have to distill from the sea and ration to a few liters per person each day – to keep golf course grass green and pretty? It seems insane, but they did it.”

Today, with genetically produced pseudograss that requires no inputs, golf courses have become public grounds that cost nothing to play. According to the institute, people used to pay as much as \$100,000 (about \$1 trillion in today’s loonie-dollars) just to join these ancient clubs.

“We believe 20th-century Americans might have suffered from some kind of

mass delusion that caused them to spend ridiculous amounts of money at these clubs,” Johanson said. “This is remarkable, considering our preliminary studies show the food at these places really sucked.”

Yet, according to scientists, some things haven’t changed.

“The primary similarity between those old courses and ours today is that players still bitch constantly about green speed,” Woods said. “Believe it or not, Hyper-Stimpmeter readings in the low 30s aren’t fast enough for some golfers. People laugh when I say my ancestors used to putt on real grass greens that Stimped at 11 or 12!”

Computer-aided putting devices and microchip-driven balls have become so accurate that some courses today are simply paving their greens with painted concrete to meet golfer expectations.

“This new technology is ruining the game and causing more headaches than ever for the robo-superintendent,” Woods said.

The golf courses of 500 years ago were also tiny in comparison to our modern ones, according to the report. Today’s courses average about 12,000 yards in length while those in the mid-20th century were merely 6,500 yards. With driving distances approaching 800 yards, even many modern classic facilities have to lengthen constantly to keep up.

Some diehard fans of classic courses like Augusta/Microsoft National have called for a rollback in technology to protect the integrity of the game, but golf’s governing bodies have yet to respond.

“We’re thinking of putting semivoluntary guidelines on club and ball technology,” said the cryogenically frozen head of David B. Fay, the longtime executive director of the Nike/Titleist Intergalactic Golf Association (formerly the USGA). “Our robo-lawyers are studying the subject urgently right now and we hope to issue a definitive report about the matter within the next 50 years.”

So why, the scientists wonder, did these clubs, which seemed so popular just a half-

millennium ago, become extinct? Johanson speculates it was because of a combination of factors:

- American culture was changing and the comforts offered by those clubs were available in many other places, including the home.
- The clubs failed to evolve and offer new amenities to attract families with 21st-century needs and interests. “The typical club member in those days was an affluent suburban man with a family,” Johanson said. “About that time, the demands for men to work more and be with his family were increasing dramatically. Most clubs simply didn’t recognize that and failed to offer more incentives to spend time and money at the facility.”
- Golf, the mainstay of most clubs of the day, was time consuming and few facilities recognized they were competing for members’ time even more than their money.
- The virtual world, represented by the primitive video games of the time, was becoming more attractive to children than the real outdoor world and clubs failed to find ways to merge the appeal of digital entertainment with their traditional services such as golf, swimming and dining.
- Most clubs were slow to accept the fact they had to market fiercely to survive. “It’s amazing how many of them just sat on their hands and hoped things would change,” Johanson said. “It was a recipe for extinction.”

The Institute’s final conclusion upon examining the remnants of several country club archeological sites (mostly consisting of fragments of ugly drapery, shards of so-called championship trophies and hundreds of bad photos of past presidents) is that the concept of the country club could have survived to this day if the people running them had possessed the foresight to adapt and change.

“In a way, they were like the Neanderthals trying to come to grips with the emergence of the more modern *Homo sapiens* species thousands of years ago,” Johanson said. “They simply didn’t recognize times had changed and they needed to change with them.” **GCI**





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