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THE WHITEBOARD

I've visited waaaay too many maintenance facilities over a quarter-century in this crazy business and it seems like every one of them falls into four basic categories.

Some are called "barns" because they are...er...barns. Sure, most of these rustic structures are located at modestly-budgeted facilities where it's the best they can afford. But it's not unusual to find a barn at a fancy newer daily fee where the superintendent will sheepishly explain that the barn was supposed to be temporary and he has the plans all drawn up for a great shop but the owner ran out of dough thanks to endless construction change orders or crappy housing sales. He will then insist on showing you the plans in detail even though both of you know full well the fancy new facility will never get built.

Others are your basic 40-year-old Morton buildings with dead equipment scattered around, an infinite number of broken pallets stacked up out back and five-gallon seed buckets being used as chairs around the lunch table. The incessant buzzing noise coming from the ancient florescent lights overhead has driven good men crazy. And there's usually one bay door that doesn't quite close right since some summer-help kid smashed a Cushman into it after he lied about being able to drive a stick shift.

The majority of maintenance facilities are probably like yours: cramped but well-organized places that are busy, noisy and constantly exuding that wonderful aromatic blend of urea, exhaust and backlapping compound. There's a course dog or two wandering around, messy piles of topdressing sand and pea gravel around the side, and at least one rusty 7-gang that's become yard art. Oh, and there's almost always a basketball goal nailed up to a utility pole in the parking lot...but it never has a net.

Finally, there are those fabulous few maintenance structures that are truly spectacular, multi-million-dollar complexes – turf Taj Mahals, as it were – with floors so clean you could eat off them and tool racks that would make a NASCAR crew chief drool. These gleaming edifices are often called the "Course

Care Center" or the "Department of Agronomy & Environmental Management" or – as members at the club refer to it – "The Really, Really Fancy Barn."

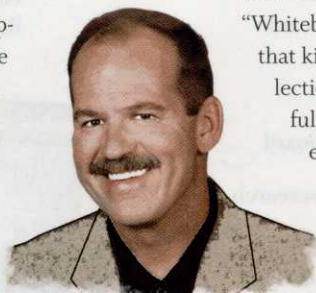
Yet, whether it's a leaky lean-to or a brand-spanking-new "Holistic Horticultural Health Headquarters," all facilities have one thing in common: The Whiteboard.

You know what I'm talking about – the ubiquitous dry-erase board that is information central for announcements, the day's assignments, warnings to not mow down Mrs. McGillicuddy's rose bushes again, etc. Aside from radios, whiteboards are the centerpiece of communications within nearly every maintenance team.

That's why we thought it made sense to have a whiteboard of our own. So, beginning this month, you'll find GCI's new "Whiteboard" section (p. 12-13) that kicks each issue off with a collection of strange and wonderful things. We'll have short, exclusive feature items, summaries of news you may have missed on our Web site, weird pictures, ear-catching quotes and other items of interest from around the golf course business. We hope you find it as useful and informative as your whiteboard at work.

You may also notice that we've separated our world-class collection of columnists. No, they were not cheating off each other in class or passing notes – we just wanted to spread their yummy goodness throughout the magazine and, we believe, give them the individual attention they deserve. Tim Moraghan is now hitting leadoff (page 18) and the rest of the batting order comes to the plate in between our fantastic feature stories. Since I do not work and play well with others, my column remains isolated on the last page.

So, enjoy the new and improved GCI, and for god's sakes put a net up on that basketball hoop. **GCI**



Pat Jones

Editorial director and publisher

Pat Jones

GOLF COURSE INDUSTRY

Serving the Business of Golf Course Management

Vol. 22 No. 5

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We'd like to hear from you.

E-mail us at gci@gie.net with your thoughts and opinions.

Chick?

While reading your article on Michelle Feher ("The Call Me Ms. Turfhead," page 18), I was shocked to see you refer to her as a "chick." She has obviously proven to be a successful and professional superintendent. I hope they never print an article about my daughter someday to promote her success, and call her a "chick."

Jeff Kadlec,
Director of agronomy
LaCantera
San Antonio, Texas



Pat Jones responds:

Jeff: I understand that the word is not for everyone, but in Michelle's case, it's how she describes herself.

I would have never used it unless she was comfortable with it.

Hits the nail

Jeff Brauer's article in your March issue, "In Praise of Contractors" (page 8), hits the nail right on the head. During these difficult business conditions it is more important than ever to make sure your selection of a builder for your golf construction work whether a new course or renovation work be dedicated to the profession of golf course construc-

tion, provide the highest ethical practices and standards, have the experience and knowledge of golf course construction as well as the skills based upon work history and references. There are lots of builders chasing less projects today. Too many of those chasing golf projects lack some or all of the above requirements and if selected could cause serious problems once the project is started or after completion with subpar quality. Use those builders dedicated to the industry. Golf Course Builders Association of America has a list of excellent builder members and can be viewed on the GCBAA Web site (www.gcbaa.org). Thanks Jeff for a very timely article supporting the golf industry.

Paul Foley, executive director
Golf Course Builders Association
of America (GCBAA)
Lincoln, Neb.

Tinnitus info

Pat Jones' column ("Huh?" page 58, April issue) is one of the most candid accounts of tinnitus and how annoying it can be for those who have it. I enjoyed it alone for that reason. Do you know about the American Tinnitus Association (www.ata.org)? You can find helpful information and advice about sound enrichment that you can use to "soften" the noise in your ears/head. I also have tinnitus and attended a few loud rock concerts in my day, but nothing like the noise exposure to Peter Townsend's amps! I use a sound machine to help me sleep. The sound

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of rain is particularly helpful. Also, there is research that looks promising, but as your doctor told you there is no cure for tinnitus. However, there is hope. Please visit ata.org and read some of the things you can do for yourself to get some relief.

Cecy Escarcega
San Diego, Calif.

The ring

Hearing loss ("Huh?" April, page 58) is a one-way street. I think mine is from being around golf course equipment all my life. I loved engines and equipment so I worked on them and was around engines a lot growing up on a golf course. Good news, I can hear some things pretty well still. Bad news, I can't hear voices well when there is background noise. One gets tired of saying "What?" and I have a hard time with new words/language because I can't hear detail too well. It can be worse – hang in there.

By the way, as past president of Chicagoland Association of Golf Course Superintendents,

Memory lane

That was a very nice article on Michelle and her career (March, "They call me Ms. Turfhead," page 18). The article brought back great memories of my childhood because my family grew up less than five miles from Boston Hills. My father taught my brother and I both how to play there, in fact back in the old days the field across the street was bring your own balls and hit for free! We spent hours practicing on that field during the summer months, and often played the course with my father and friends whenever time permitted. As a member of my high school's golf team it was our home course, therefore it served as a difficult track with its tiny greens and mature trees for visiting teams

that weren't used to the course layout. When I had heard from my friends back home a few years ago it had been shut down, it saddened me to know a piece of my childhood was gone, unable to be recovered by playing one last round. That was over 25 years ago and since that time my family is still near to the game of golf that we learned at Boston Hills. My father has enjoyed the last 20 years of his retirement by playing 200-plus rounds a year at Pinehurst CC where he resides, and my brother Doug and I are both golf course superintendents. Thanks for the memories.

Dan Walter
Superintendent
City of Blue Ash Golf Course
Blue Ash, Ohio

we talk frequently about how to get people to attend meetings. It's probably a lot like your business, how to get and keep readers. Lifestyles have changed as well as the resources available to get information. But, like you, the bottom line is to be proactive and have good information to share, and at times flirting with

the edge in new things that interest people and are helpful in work. Most times the innovative information comes from peers as we openly share our thoughts and experiences.

Dan Dinelli, CGCS
North Shore Country Club
Glenview, Ill.

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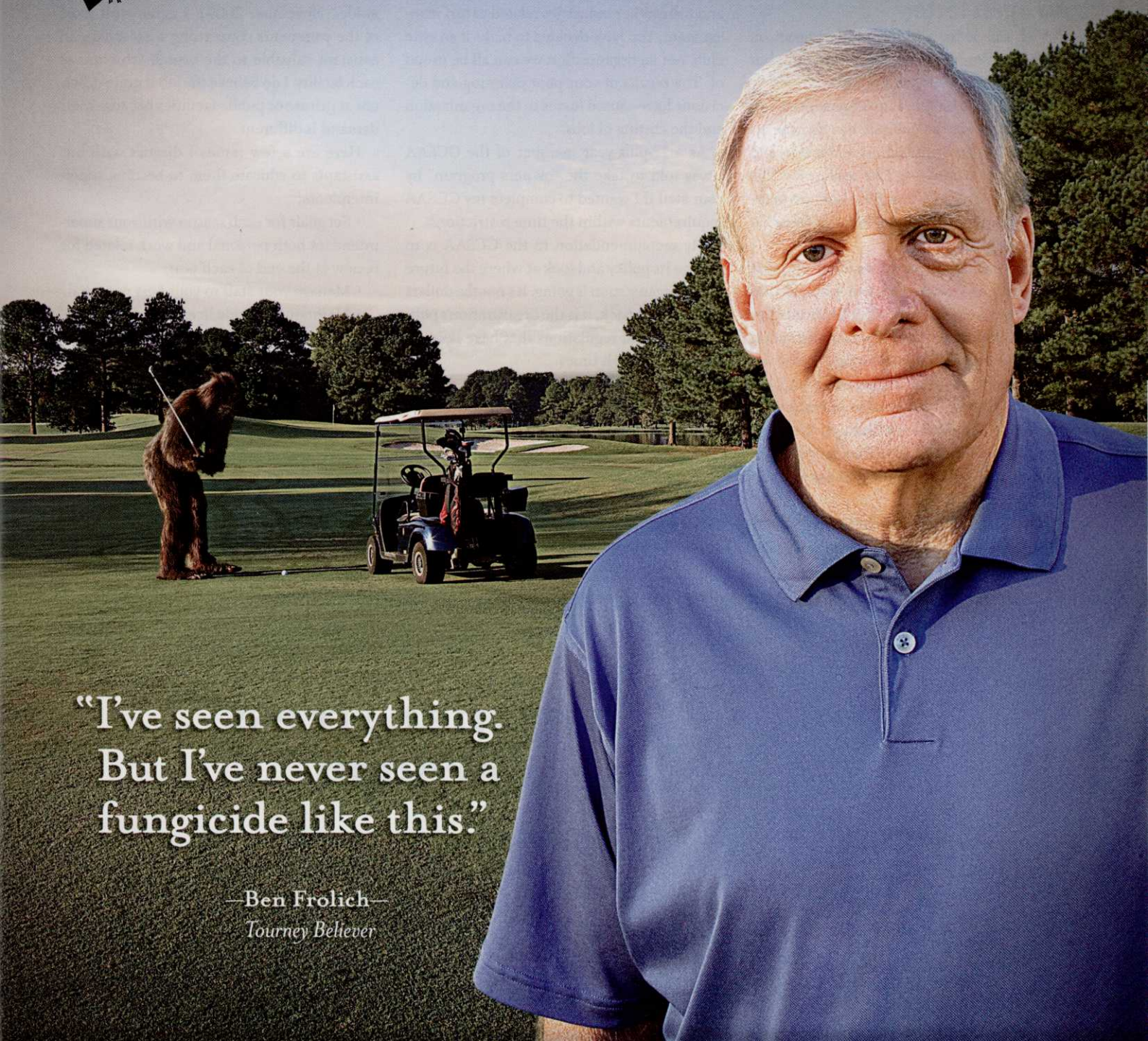
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An open letter

If read, this letter will have little impact on the GCSAA organization and philosophy, but I have decided to send it anyways.

I have been a member for 17-plus years and for some reason the GSCAA has become an elite club. As an organization we have locked out future enrollment. The reason for this was because times were good and we were selective, but somehow we lost our focus on our future goals.

I have owned my own course for 30 years and I took the rounds played from 12,000 rounds per year to over 40,000 rounds per year. I'm very proud of this accomplishment. I have put my middle son through four years of turf school at Purdue. He graduated in 1996 and has taken over all outside operations at the facility. He shares my feelings. What we do for our members and customers is still No. 1 and somehow this organization has lost that philosophy.

You are losing the members that moved from golf course turf to landscape, lawn care

and many other industries related to turf management. You have decided to make it an elite club, not an organization we can all be proud of. The results of your poor planning and decisions have caused losses to the organization and the cutting of jobs.

As a 17-plus-year member of the GCSAA I was told to take the "owners program" by your staff if I wanted to complete my GCSAA requirements within the time restrictions.

My recommendation to the GCSAA is to change its policy and look at where the future of this organization is going. It's not the dollars that hold me back, it is the organization's policies, rules and regulations that have become obsolete in tough times.

Jerry Reynolds, GCSAA#096495

Owner
Edwood Glen County Club
West Lafayette, Ind.

Assistant thoughts

I read your article on the do's and don'ts for assistant superintendents ("Assistant success

guide," November 2009). I agree with most of the comments concerning what makes an assistant valuable to the overall structure of each facility. I do believe the job is quite different at private or public facilities because their demand is different.

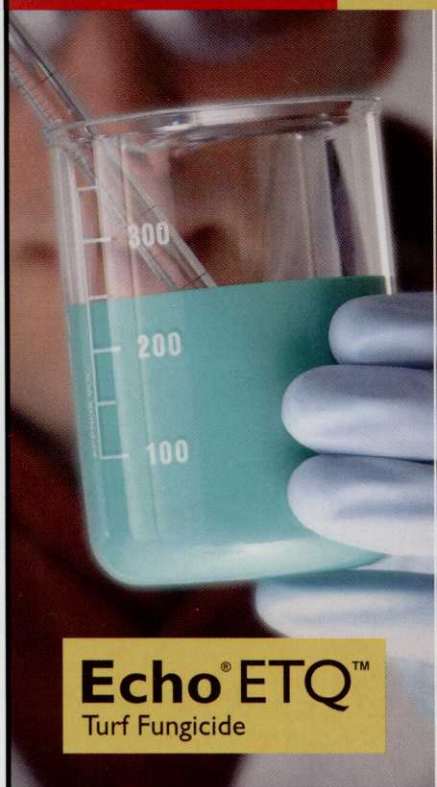
Here are a few issues I discuss with our assistants to educate them to become superintendents:

- Set goals for each season with your superintendant both personal and work related for review at the end of each year.
- Manage your staff to your best potential.
- Maintain pesticide license and points.
- Become involved in local and national organizations to further education.
- Attend educational seminars pertaining to all aspects of golf management – irrigation, pesticides and equipment operations.

Don't be afraid to make decisions.

Jim Howell
Superintendent
The Ledges C.C.
Huntsville, Ala.

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