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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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Get a *life*

GCI spotlights people's lives outside of turf.

While many golfers would like to see more eagles, Brian Beckner is content to pick up a few bluebirds. Beckner, superintendent at La Playa in Naples, spends his free time on the course birding – that is, looking for birds – and more recently, building housing to encourage specific species to take up residence. His tenants reside among the 14 wooden birdhouse boxes, six PVC bird boxes and two purple martin houses that he built and maintain himself. He's even developed a business around building birdhouses.

What influenced you to start building bird houses on the golf course? All of this began with my love of nature, being outdoors and bird watching. Having been in the golf course management industry for the last 20 years, one of my greatest pleasures is observing Florida wildlife that passes through each season and sharing these experiences with others. I enjoy spending time outdoors and get a thrill from watching the varieties of birds which inhabit southwest Florida, even at times of rescue when an injured animal needed assistance. We use local professional agencies for nursing these animals back to health, our's locally is the Conservancy of Southwest Florida.



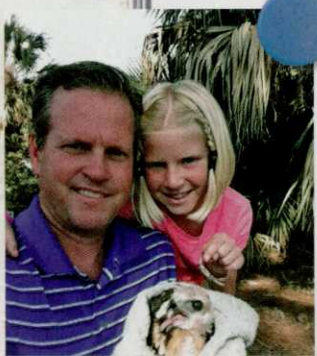
Beckner has more than 20 boxes at La Playa.

I explored and created other species specific boxes. As life developed further for me, I began to share this same passion with my children, for which the company is named. The company now builds and supplies area golf courses with species specific nesting boxes so that others too can foster natural habitats for the numerous bird species in Southwest Florida or wherever they may take them.

What are some of the rare species of birds you've seen on the course? The species that are most common in the bird houses the eastern bluebird, red-bellied woodpecker, the screech owl and one of my favorites, wood ducks. I have a particular box for wood ducks and since 2003 we fledged young from that wood duck box every year – in 2012, it fledged three broods.

A juvenile red tail hawk fell from a tree, and we rescued it. We took it down to the Conservancy of Southwest Florida, where they took care of it on the weekend. They released it to me on Monday and I put the hawk back in the nest with its sibling with an 80-foot lift I rented. Typically, the siblings fight. There's a lot of sibling rivalry – one got kicked out of the nest, and we were at the right time at the right place. It was within seconds of setting the bird down out of my hand into the nest that the parent came down and took it right after and was feeding it.

How have the birds improved the golf course? Being able to keep the wildlife going is the most important thing to me. It seems there's a depletion and a loss of nature so I like being able to provide a habitat and even a bird feeder. I don't care how young or old you are, I can get a smile and a conversation knowing that we are giving back to nature.



Beckner's company, Lane Edwards Designs, produces handcrafted Audobon-sensitive habitats nesting boxes for different bird species.

From THE FEED

A true golf legend was lost when Stan Zontek, the director of the USGA Green Section's Mid-Atlantic Region, passed away Aug. 28 after suffering a heart attack. GCI followers are reminiscing about his impact on golf, but superintendents came together online to give tribute to a hero of the turf manager, including a specialized hashtag of some of his famous lines.



William Brown, CGCS @greensuper
"Bill, at the end of the day, it's just grass."
#ThingsStanSays



Stan ending all his presentations with "Go Golf!" #ThingsStanSays

One of my favorites "How's the family?"
#ThingsStanSays

TPC Potomac GCM
@TPCPotomacGCM
"You know Stephen, the grass wants to grow." #ThingsStanSays



Ryan Howard @TWRyanHoward
"Grass can't tell how much your Nitrogen costs." #ThingsStanSays



Michael Fidanza @MikeFidanza
"This is not for publication" ...
#ThingsStanSays



Shane A Miller @SmillerTurf
"Is losing a few trees a bad thing?"
#ThingsStanSays



Richard M Pagett @RickPagett
"I am Stan Zontek, class of 1970 (with that smile)!" #ThingsStanSays



Join the conversation
on Twitter @GCIMagazine!



Getting it sorted

The turf is a little greener at Royal Oaks Country Club in Vancouver, Wash., in more than one way. GreenDrop Recycling Stations are popping up around the course, in an effort to make it easier for golfers to reduce their environmental impact.

"We're a part of the Audubon program," says Alan Nielson, superintendent. "We want to be good stewards and recycle what we can."

The new stations - the first on a golf course - are meant to make it easier to self-sort recyclables on the fly. The container is a single unit, so waste shares the same space, and rather than using generic labels it sport images that show users which products go where.

"Why have just a small label that says 'Glass' when you can have a label set that show easily recognizable pictures of suitable items?" says Marcia LaFond, club manager.

The club has seen a high rate of participation due to the one-stop sorting, says LaFond, and the containers clean out with a damp rag or power wash. Beyond the training on recyclables and compostable items, the containers have provided another benefit on the course.

"We used the custom advertising panels to reinforce Royal Oaks in-house branding," she says. "Those panels are eye-catching."

Syngenta acquires DuPont's insecticide business

One year after DuPont's Imprelis herbicide was linked to widespread damage to non-target plants, Syngenta has acquired the company's insecticide business.

Syngenta picks up pest control brands Advion, Acelepryn, Altriset, Calteryx, Provaunt and Arilon, as well as other intellectual property, and some employees. Syngenta will also access the related active ingredients and formulated products from DuPont through exclusive supply and licensing agreements. DuPont will continue to manufacture and distribute products using indoxacarb, chlorantraniliprole, cyantraniliprole.

The \$125 million transaction is expected to close in the fourth quarter 2012.

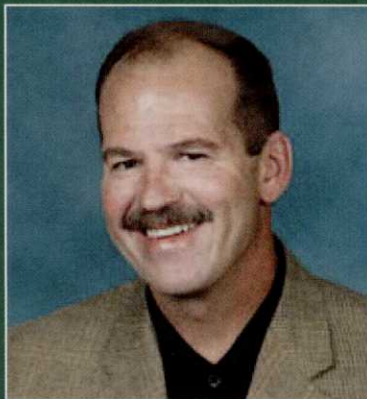
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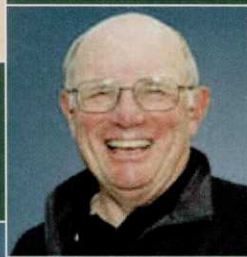
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The ratings game

by Jeff Brauer

If you delve back into the long history of this illustrious sport I'd bet that you'd find it was the construction of the game's second golf course that served as the catalyst for the first official golf course ranking.

So why do we find this process so fascinating? Because it's simple human nature to rank the things we like and enjoy – and golf is certainly no different.

Rankings, though, create a fair amount of anxiety among clubs, superintendents and golf course architects, like myself. So to get a better handle on getting a leg up on the ranking process, I tracked down Ron Whitten, Golf Digest's resident rankings guru, and asked him to enlighten us on the golf course ranking process.

What are the best and worst parts about doing these rankings?

After 27 years, I'd say the best part is helping generate interest and enthusiasm for of golf course design. I love the fact that people debate our "100 Greatest" rankings, complain about them, even condemn them. We don't claim to have a perfect system, but we do offer justification for our rankings, for all to see. You may not agree with our list, but at least you know how we got there.

The worst part is informing courses that fell off our rankings. No one likes to receive bad news, and I don't enjoy delivering it. They're not losers, but they feel like they are. The worst situations are when courses fall off simply because it didn't get enough evaluations to qualify for a ranking. (We need a minimum of 10 over 8 years for Best in State, 25 over 8 years for 100 Greatest Public, 45 over 8 years for 100 Greatest.)

It's really our task, not theirs, to maintain coverage. With 1,100 panelists, you'd think that would be easy, but it's not. We have 1,600 courses competing in our various surveys every two years. Panelists are volunteers, travel and play at the own expense and timetables. It's hard to get everybody everywhere.

“Conditioning’ is the one area every club can control.”

— Ron Whitten, *Golf Digest*

