

Shades Of Green

■ OPINION

Happy New Year, New Century and New Millennium. These are fascinating times when we're riding a wave of high-tech energy that's speeding up our lives — but I fear we may be enjoying ourselves less now.

So here's a reminder to take into the year 2000: Man is the master of his fate, and machines are tools man uses at his discretion.

Once again, now, say it with me: "Man is master. Machine is slave." Got it? Good.

Now I hope I never again see — or, more accurately, hear — superintendents and sales reps getting up in the middle of chapter meetings and guest speaker presentations to answer phone calls on their cell phones.

What an ugly trend we find ourselves caught in as the new millennium begins in a world on a technology high. Instantaneous information and communications are like drugs. We are letting ourselves become slaves to the beep, blink and buzz.

It's great that people can stay in touch from anywhere at anytime. But having the ability to do it doesn't mean it's proper to disrupt meetings and presentations with cell phones and pagers. People need a little self-discipline, and they also need to remember the manners their mothers taught them.

While these communications devices give us more freedom to roam and still stay in touch, remember that only a few short years ago you went to the pay phone during breaks in meetings and seminars to check in with the office or with customers.

Well, people need to use the same technique now. They need to turn off those phones and pagers during meetings and seminars and make their calls during breaks. It's rude and annoying to everyone, including the guest speaker, when someone's cell phone starts ringing during a meeting. Note the term, "guest" speaker. You're supposed to be polite to them.

And what's with leaving the cell phone on during a round of golf? Last year, during a round after a chapter meeting, I saw a distressing scenario of this pathetic stunt. One of our foursome was either calling or being called by his girlfriend on every hole on the

Take That Cell Phone and Shove it

BY JOEL JACKSON



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back nine, discussing when he was going to finish the round so they could go to dinner.

I almost fed him a sand wedge on the spot.

Just a hint to golfing cell phone users — walking across the cart path from the tee does not put you out of earshot of the other three people trying to tee off. And having that blasted phone ring is a real bummer when you're winding up to whack that surly Surlyn pellet. I make the game tough enough on my own without Ma Bell breaking my concentration with her little ringy-dingy.

I'm really ambivalent about this cell phone thing. On one hand, I'm glad folks can get to meetings and network with peers and all that good stuff. But I don't think it's asking too much for them to use their cell phones a little more responsibly.

If they have to be up and down during meetings and take or make calls during golf, then maybe they shouldn't be there — and should be where they're calling or receiving calls from. Don't screw up my day because you're cellularly challenged.

For those suffering from cell phone-itis, I hope you can get a grip in 2000. Your bosses are flipping out as your air-time bills are soaring.

I appeal to all meeting hosts, masters of ceremonies, chapter presidents and golf pros to ask attendees to turn off their cell phones for the duration of the meeting or round of golf.

If that brings on unbearable withdrawal symptoms, then take that cell phone and shove it!

Joel Jackson, CGCS, retired from Disney's golf division in 1997 and is director of communications for the Florida GCSA. At meetings and on the golf course, he leaves his cell phone in his car.