

*Editor's note: Larry Aylward was promoted to editor of *Golfdom*. Pat Jones assumes the new title of editorial director and continues as the magazine's publisher. Aylward's new column, *Pin High*, will appear monthly.*

It was one of my first encounters with a celebrity that thrilled me. And 25 years later, I still get a charge when I talk about the time I bumped into Jack Nicklaus in the men's room on the South Course at the Firestone CC in Akron, Ohio.

It was a crisp, sun-splashed Sunday afternoon in August 1975 and Nicklaus was on the verge of winning the PGA Championship, the 15th of his 18 Major titles. Nicklaus was on the back nine, in the midst of fighting off Bruce Crampton for the crown, when he ducked into the john to take care of business. Nature had called me to the tiny, concrete building just a minute before.

I'll never forget looking up next to me, as I hovered over the porcelain, to see the Golden Bear standing there looking down. More than that, though, I'll never forget his pleasant smile and "hello" when he gazed over at me. (Luckily, I didn't *turn* and say, "Wow, you're Jack Nicklaus!") He was sincere and gracious to me — a gawky, peach-fuzzed 13-year-old — and it means as much to me now as it did then.

I had a similar encounter with Arnold Palmer when I covered the Senior Players Championship at Canterbury GC in Cleveland when I was a young, naive sportswriter in 1986. The second round of the tournament was rained out — but I still had to fill the space in the next day's sports section — and I was in panic mode.

I remember bugging Palmer in the club lounge and asking him several unenlightening questions about the weather. But Palmer was as patient and polite with me as the Pope.

Why am I telling you all of this? Because it has everything to do with your livelihood.

The golf course industry, I have found in less than two years with *Golfdom*, is crowded with ladies and gentlemen. And that's no coincidence.

Recently, I spoke with a golf course owner who talked at length about the nuances of the

Your Passion Is Why We Publish

BY LARRY AYLWARD



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game, but not undulating greens and strategically placed bunkers. He spoke zealously about golf as it relates to character — as in gentleness and honesty, as well as respect for others and the environment. Those are prerequisites for the jobs you perform as superintendents, assistant superintendents, designers, owners and general managers.

That's why I enjoy covering this industry. Never in my 15-year journalism career have I encountered individuals who are so easy to talk to and respectful of each other and nature. And you are so passionate about what you do.

Your devotion is contagious. It makes me and everyone at *Golfdom* more enthusiastic about publishing a magazine that you can learn from and enjoy.

We love that you're willing to be participants in our stories. We also love that you're not afraid to get miffed at us. As a journalist, and one who has encountered apathetic audiences, it's a pleasure to be a part of and cover your industry.

We will continue to bring it on, if you know what I mean. You can count on us for telling both sides of the story — from the Professional Development Initiative to management companies.

When *Golfdom* began in 1999, publisher/editorial director Pat Jones promised that the magazine wouldn't shy away from controversy or pull punches. We want to cover your controversies because we want to help you find solutions to them. We won't pull punches, but we'll sure continue to tell it like it is.

We hope you continue to take the same approach with us.

*Larry Aylward, editor of *Golfdom*, wonders if Jack Nicklaus remembers their meeting in the men's room. Aylward can be reached at 440-891-2770 or laylward@advanstar.com.*