

**H**as anyone noticed the frequency with which certain architects make statements that demonstrate an almost incomprehensible lack of modesty and, worse, defy logic?

One architect sends out a press releases declaring that his next design is another “masterpiece.” Another architect pats himself on the back for finding a way to spend time with his family and to keep designing great courses. Another architect states how he’s always dreamed of building one of the world’s great courses — and now “I finally have!”

Pre-Sept. 11, there seemed to be a willingness to let such statements pass. (Some apparently admired this brash grandstanding.) But now I must ask: Is this complete lack of humility acceptable in a country that’s trying to unite as a community?

It’s one thing for architects to pat themselves on the back when the courses in question are their own. But now some architects are stretching the meaning of restoration — and the truth pertaining to documented facts — to promote their own causes or justify peculiar alterations.

“We did just what Tillinghast would have done if he were here today” is a classically immodest declaration uttered daily to justify non-restorative work. Notice they never preface such remarks with something like, “We sure hope we did what Mr. Ross might have done in this situation;” or, “We researched what Mr. Raynor built, and this is our best guess at interpreting his style.”

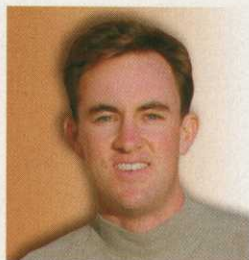
Prefacing these sweeping declarations would require two things that certain architects just don’t believe in: humility and information.

If you ask the architects who’ve done their research, you never hear them make such blanket statements about doing what the old guys would do if they were around today. Instead, you hear things like, “Well, Langford’s tendency was to do this;” or, “If I had to guess based on the photos, his writings and what is evident in the ground features, I’d suggest that this bunker was here to make the hole more interesting.”

Rees Jones recently declared his affection for Billy Bell’s design work — and then took a bulldozer to Torrey Pines. Last fall, former Golf Channel host Peter Kessler interviewed Augusta

## Time to Come Down Off Your High Horse

BY GEOFF SHACKELFORD



FOR SOME  
ARCHITECTS,  
IT’S TOO HARD  
TO BE HUMBLE

National’s consulting architect, Tom Fazio. Besides repeatedly referring to how he builds “great” courses during this hour of spin, Fazio stooped to a new low in explaining why the “so-called” Golden Age doesn’t measure up to today’s (his) brilliant designs.

While justifying changes at Augusta, Fazio pointed out to Kessler that the course really isn’t an Alistair MacKenzie design. In Fazio’s mind, it’s more of a Bobby Jones work because MacKenzie wasn’t around much when it was built.

However, according to the club’s official history, *The Making of the Masters* by David Owen, MacKenzie made three prolonged visits to Augusta in July 1931, September 1931 (and into October) and March 1932, the latter when he supervised the last of the contour work on the greens. Of the third visit, Owen writes, “He remained until April.”

Back then, “The Doctor” didn’t have a client paying his jet fuel costs (actually, according to its own history, Augusta never paid up on MacKenzie’s entire fee of \$5,000, which was lowered from his normal \$10,000). He was taking the train to Georgia and didn’t have any other jobs in the area. We can surmise he wasn’t just jetting in to pose for some pictures, declare his brilliance, and leave things to Bobby Jones and Wendell Miller. So we’ll be conservative and guess that MacKenzie was on site for a total of 35 days. In today’s world of design by fax, that’s an eternity.

I wouldn’t say for sure what MacKenzie and other old architects would think about all of this presumptuous talk of what they would do if they were here today or what some people think they contributed. But I’d be happy to take an educated guess.

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