

## Off The Fringe

# A Q&A With Mike Heacock

INDUSTRY VETERAN, WHO'S BASED IN TOKYO, REFLECTS ON WHAT HAS BEEN

**Name:** Mike Heacock

**Title:** Senior Vice President of Course Maintenance for Pacific Golf Management K.K. in Tokyo.

**Age:** Turned 39 for the 21st time this year

**Number of years working in the golf industry:** More than 30

**Who has been the biggest influence on your career and why?** The late Dr. Kent Kurtz, the longtime educator at the California Polytechnic State University; and Rich Eichner, golf course superintendent at Discovery Bay Country Club in Byron, Calif. They were wonderful mentors in the best sense of that word.

**What was the defining moment in your professional or personal life?** Realizing 23 years ago that I did not want to come in every morning to the same golf course and the same crew and the



same members for the rest of my working life.

**What's the greatest invention the golf industry has seen?**

The bulldozer.

**If you could change something about the industry right now,**

**what would you change?** The equipment the pros are using makes classic courses obsolete. Let us amateurs play with whatever, but regulate the clubs and balls for the pros.

**If a movie were made about your life, what actor would play you?** A medium-height old guy with a beer gut.

**Last book read:** Bill Bryson: "I'm a Stranger Here Myself."

**Favorite movie:** (tie) "Blazing Saddles" and "Patton"

**Describe yourself in one word:** Grateful

**My hero is:** Mickey Mantle

**I hope to be remembered as:** Someone who cared. ■

*Continued from page 12*

■ The initial meetings in the 1990s raised awareness of the issues of concern to all parties.

■ Common ground was found and good programs were implemented.

■ Participation over time has flattened. The questions were asked: What can be done to stimulate more involvement? And what incentives are there for lower-budget facilities to get involved with G&E?

■ How does the industry communicate/market the message that golf courses can be community assets?

■ Groups like regulators, local governments, media and the general public need to hear the science behind golf. How do we best achieve this?

■ Data gathering is essential to benchmark current status and track progress. GCSAA's Environmental Profile Project will provide this information.

■ New research should be on new turf varieties that require lower inputs. Research into social marketing to understand golfer and public attitudes, and how to craft effective methods of educating them, is also needed.

■ The group's steering committee will process all the comments and attempt to identify and prioritize goals for adoption and action by the group.

What was most evident from the meeting in Anaheim is that the industry has come a long way, but it can't rest on its laurels. Much remains to be done to fully educate society about how golf and the environment can exist in harmony. ■

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