

Shades Of Green

■ OPINION

A funny thing happened on my way to my first colonoscopy at age 65. I learned there are some pills you can swallow instead of drinking that horrible stuff that has been used for decades. And the porcelain perch is still your best friend during the prep period.

My doctor is an avid golfer, and I noticed the guy ahead of me paying him off in golf balls, ProV1s no less. My last words to him before the anesthesia kicked in were, "Don't take any divots."

One small benign polyp later, I was off to eat real food with a reminder to return in three years. Have you 50-year-olds seen your gastro-enterologist yet? I was pushing the envelope waiting so long, but I'm here to tell you it wasn't as bad as I had imagined it would be.

One thing I haven't taken for granted — at least I don't think I have — is the wealth of information I have gathered along the road of life. Given my line of work, a lot of those roads have been cart paths on lush, green layouts, and last week I picked up a couple of tidbits I'm compelled to share, not because they were life changing, but because they were interesting.

Do you know proper gopher tortoise handling etiquette? Well, I learned that there are definitely a couple of basic rules to follow when picking up a gopher tortoise to show an excited group of school kids and their accompanying adults on a tour of your course. Understand that gopher tortoises are just as excited to see you as you are to see them. They are so excited in fact that they will lose bladder control and pee all over you if you are not careful. It might seem logical to hold them horizontally in their natural crawling orientation, but you will end up wet if you do. So when picking up a gopher tortoise to show your visitors, keep his head up, his tail down and your arms fully extended away from your body.

The gopher grab was being demonstrated by certified superintendent Tim Hiers at his

Tales of Tortoises, Death and Jackasses

BY JOEL JACKSON



KNOWING THE
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Old Collier Golf Club in Naples, Fla., and he admitted he learned the technique the hard way.

We also spied a 3.5-inch-long baby tortoise with a yellowish shell compared to the familiar dull-gray shells of the adults. Hiers mentioned that crows are the chief predator of the soft-shelled youngsters. They pick them up and fly into a tree to peck them right out of their little leathery shells. But there's a happy ending: Hiers reported the tortoise population is up 70 percent since the course opened.

Another lesson learned recently revolved around coyotes, which have moved to Florida in significant numbers and might soon rival the human snowbird migrations. Now this little pearl of wisdom I'm about to reveal might not be news to the folks living west of the Mississippi, but it was news to this Easterner.

Don't ask me why our lunch conversation turned to the growing number of goat herds springing up in the state, but I guess there could be worse things. Eventually, the conversation progressed to talk about how coyotes were preying on the kids, the young goats, that is. Once again, Hiers, the walking encyclopedia of environmental trivia, said goat ranchers have learned to put a couple of donkeys in the goat herd because a donkey will flat out kill a coyote while the goats just panic.

You probably could have gone through life without needing to know about tortoise handling etiquette or donkey bodyguards, but after reading this column you can now file for GCSAA education points. I'm just not sure in which category.

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