

It's not often I do this, if ever, but I recently boarded a flight with no plan on what would happen once it landed.

If you follow me on Twitter (@*Golfdom*), you would have seen me joking that I was on a secret mission.

But the real secret about the mission was that I was flying by the seat of my pants. My hopeful interview subject didn't know I was flying out to see him, and I only had a short window to see him — exactly one Friday morning — before my flight back home to Kansas.

I am a big believer in signs. My secret mission got off to a good start when I left my hotel in Cleveland and the good people at the front desk had summoned a limousine to get me to the airport. The next good sign was when the rental car guy offered me a great deal on a beautiful silver 2012 Corvette convertible (he must have liked my Kansas Jayhawks shirt.) As you know, a secret mission is best accomplished with the aide of a 6.2 liter, 430-horse V8 engine.

It took one full day of travel (Cleveland to Charlotte, Charlotte to Phoenix, Phoenix to San Jose) to get to Santa Cruz, Calif. I arrived at Pasatiempo Golf Club early the next day and asked at the golf shop if my hopeful interview — superintendent Paul Chojnacky, who is on the cover of this issue you hold in your hands — was available.

"I haven't seen Paul today, and usually he stops by," the pro shop guy told me.

Uh-oh. Bad sign.

He asked for my name and I told him. He called Paul's cell phone, no answer. He left a voicemail for him, telling him that "Seth Green" was waiting for him at the pro shop.

Being confused for "Scott Evil" from the "Austin Powers" movies? Another bad sign.

I went to the maintenance shop and asked around. Paul was at an off-site meeting, I learned. Big uh-oh. But I haggled his cell phone number and sent him a nervous text.

What a relief. Only a few minutes later he texted me back and said he could meet me in an hour. The secret mission narrowly avoided blowing up in my face.

I waited for Paul in the clubhouse bar. He sat down and we started chatting. "What are

A Secret Mission from *Golfdom*

BY SETH JONES



MY INTERVIEW

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you doing in town?" he asked. I told him, to his surprise, that I was there specifically to see him. And then I told him that he was the winner of the first ever Herb Graffis Business Person of the Year award, which included a trip to the Golf Industry Show and a *Golfdom* cover story. "This is quite a surprise," Paul told me, "but certainly appreciated."

Next year I'll find a less nerve-wracking way to present the award. Maybe we'll lose the Corvette and instead splurge on a giant cake and some fireworks along with an oversized check. But for going in with no plan, my secret mission turned out pretty good. Paul gave me a great tour of his golf course and all the time I needed to make this story work. That story begins on page 14.

And then, compare that to another story in this same issue, written by another superintendent who would surely make *Golfdom* founder Herb Graffis proud. The story is called "Design on a Dime," and it's written by Bill Wall. It's about how he keeps a successful golf operation with a limited budget and limited staffing, and it starts on page 25.

While the Graffis Business Person of the Year story took me five flights, a limo, a Corvette and a lucky text message to complete, the Wall story took all of three emails and one phone call to obtain.

While the two stories vary greatly in how they came to be in *Golfdom*, both stories have in common savvy business people working hard to make their golf operations click. I think readers will appreciate and can learn from both Paul and Bill.

And now... no more secret missions for me for a while.

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