

Has it really been 10 years? Where does the time go? It doesn't seem that long ago that I was sitting in the PTI-max theater in Sylacauga, Ala., for the first time. In reality it was some seven or eight years ago. Maybe nine.

What do I remember most about that trip? Complete honesty here: It was the best, and first, bread pudding I've ever had.

It's true, I was a bread pudding virgin up to that point. Apparently bread pudding isn't on the menu of every Mexican-American family, because it certainly wasn't part of Momma Jones' repertoire.

I've since made a point of trying to find its equal, with no success. That search (and my quest for the best chicken fried steak in the world) is still ongoing, and still adding pounds by the day.

But hey, a quest is a quest.

When I was told that this year marked 10 years of the Experience at FarmLinks, I knew I wanted that story to be told in *Golfdom*.

There is no other place like FarmLinks in our industry, period. I'm talking about the living laboratory that is the golf course. I'm talking about small groups of superintendents. I'm talking about Southern hospitality. I'm talking about getting picked up at the Birmingham airport one minute, then having five new friends in the industry about 60 minutes later.

The thing I find so interesting about FarmLinks is that this company brought everyone to them. David Pursell and his team made this company flourish by getting superintendents from around the world to board a plane and arrive on their home turf. Every pitch in this industry lives or dies based on the opportunity to communicate a message. To get thousands of superintendents to come to you, sleep under your roof and give you a few days to communicate your message sounds crazy. Yet it worked. Repeatedly.

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My Friends at FarmLinks

BY SETH JONES



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Technologies. How many people in our industry can claim such a thing? And to do so under your own roof — where you're the one serving up the bread pudding?

Being in the communications business, I can't help but admire what they've done there over the last 10 years. With the creation of the *Golfdom* Summit (shameless plug, see page 6) I also feel like I'm trying to play a variation of a song originally written by the folks at FarmLinks.

I visited with my friends at FarmLinks earlier this year, doing the interviews for this story. It dawned on me there that it would be most appropriate to turn the microphone over to them and say, "here." They've been masters at communicating their story on their own terms for so long, who am I to interrupt the transmission?

Rather than pepper you with a snappy intro and ending, I instead hit "record" on the voice recorder and let the people of FarmLinks tell their story in their words. They're good at it. After all, they've been doing it for 10 years.

What most reminds you of FarmLinks? Maybe it's the fellow superintendents you met there. Maybe it's their Southern hospitality. Maybe it's a new method of maintenance you brought back to your own course. Maybe it was the (gasp!) lack of alcohol, which, thankfully, has been relaxed in recent years.

Whatever it is, I hope you'll indulge me and join me for a retrospective celebrating one of the most unique places dedicated to our industry. Their story begins on page 24.

If you haven't been there yet? Work on getting on the invite list. It's worth your time.

And while you're there, do yourself a favor — save room for the bread pudding.

Email Jones (especially chicken fried steak recommendations) at sjones@northcoastmedia.net