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JOEL JACKSON, *Contributing Editor*

Moments to remember

We all have memories of good and bad days in the business, and when 2013 got under way, well, it put me in a nostalgic mood. So here’s a look back at some of my favorite memories on the job, in no particular order. I’m looking forward to adding to this list in 2013.

The day I made Bob Hope laugh. While working at Disney’s Lake Buena Vista Club, I met Mr. Hope, who just happened to be playing the course. As his group was readying their carts, he needed to return to the main level of the clubhouse. I gave him a ride in my cart, we exchanged pleasantries, then we parted ways.

Later in the day, I was riding with a crew member out on the course when we came across Hope and his group on #13. I had a badly cut golf ball in the dash compartment, so, as a joke, I scribbled “Bob’s Ball” on a piece of paper, attached it to a “smiley” ball and teed it up on the 14th tee. Then I ducked out of sight. When Hope got to the tee, we

heard him laugh and utter something like, “Would you look at that!”

Working with Arnold Palmer. If you were lucky enough to hear Peter Jacobsen’s keynote speech at the GIS last year, you got a humorous and heartfelt sense of the famed Palmer personality which, having worked with him for three years at the Isleworth G&CC near Orlando, I can attest to.

Back then, in the late ‘80s and early ‘90s, 10 to 12 courses were on suicide missions to grow Penncross bentgrass in Florida, including Isleworth. I was Isleworth’s superintendent at the time, and I used to routinely check in with Palmer as he played the course.

One day, he looked at the greens and casually said, “This is the way I always hoped they could be.” Looking back, that moment is one of

the highlights of my tenure with “The King.”

(Of course, during the summers Palmer spent in Latrobe, Penn., the greens at Isleworth were maybe 85 percent to 90 percent good. Eventually, year-round expectations drove the renovation to bermudagrass — a much wiser choice for central Florida.)

One funny lowlight of my association with Palmer came when I was interviewing for that superintendent position. The interview was great. Palmer’s superintendent at the time, Jim Ellison, and I were good friends. And since Palmer and I had both been in the U. S. Coast Guard, we had a common link.

After handshakes and farewells out in the Bay Hill parking lot, however, I noticed something on the

sleeve of my brand new Hart, Schafner & Marx navy blazer — bought just for the occasion. There they were, four small words emblazoned on a fabric tag for all to see: “Jack Nicklaus — Golden Bear.” I was mortified.

I eventually went back to Disney, finished my 20-year hitch and got my gold watch. During that time, I was privileged to work on many Disney Classic PGA Tour events and with Tour officials John Brendle and Mark Russell, who were Disney golf operations supervisors with me before joining the Tour.

I’ll close with a wildlife story. One evening I got a call from the Lake Buena Vista pro shop about a leaking pipe under the bridge on No. 13. Sure enough, a compression coupling on the 10-inch pipe was loose.

As I finished the repairs in the dark, helped only by my car’s headlights, I stepped back to survey the repair. I looked up and discovered a curious bobcat cub sitting six feet from my head, watching me.

Ask me again why I love this business!

Thanks for sharing your stories and thanks for giving me so many wonderful memories so far in my career. I’m looking forward to many more wonderful times sure to come in the new year.

Joel Jackson, CGCS-Ret., is director of communications for the Florida GCSA.