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Circle No 111

## Off The Fringe

# She's Just What They Needed

CANNON BRINGS VARIOUS TALENTS TO HER ROLE AS CACTUS AND PINE GCSA'S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

By Larry Aylward, Editor

**A** superintendent gives her a heartfelt hug. Another superintendent kids her about her golf game. Then she greets you with beaming eyes and an expansive smile and apologizes for the Arizona heat, as if she's responsible for it. That's Lynn Cannon, executive director of the Cactus and Pine GCSA, in a nutshell.

Cannon, who celebrated her second anniversary with the association in June, is appreciated and respected by members. They like that she's unassuming, can take a joke and cares how one feels.

"She has made a huge difference in how we're perceived by our allied organizations and our own members," says Kevin Smith, president of the Cactus and Pine GCSA and CGCS at the Golf Club at Eagle Mountain in Fountain Hills, Ariz.

Three years ago, the Cactus and Pine GCSA was floundering.

"We have some of the best maintained golf courses in the country and some of the most talented superintendents, but our association didn't reflect it," Smith says. "Somebody had to change that."

Cannon has. She upgraded the association's educational and social agendas,



Cannon has worked as a flight attendant, management consultant and counselor.

She was poised and amicable at the association's annual spring meeting, which attracted more attendees than ever. "It has been a 180-degree turn for us," Smith says.

Cannon says it was simply a matter of getting organized and implementing a long-range plan.

"We have a great group of men who wanted to see the profession move forward, but didn't have the framework to do so," Cannon says. "I saw my position as pulling them together as a team,

providing the framework and working with them so they could be successful."

Cannon, 56, is the association's first executive director and one of several women to lead state GCSAs. Cannon says Arizona superintendents, mostly men, haven't questioned her abilities.

"They have been perfect gentlemen," she says. "They've been easy to work with."

Cannon has diverse experience from several fields — she has worked as a flight attendant, management consultant and is a certified mental health counselor — and also knows a little about golf. Her former husband, golf course architect Gary Roger Baird, taught Cannon the basics of construction and maintenance.

"I love to be busy and get things done," says Cannon, who operates the Cactus and Pine GCSA office out of her home. "I like to see a good plan come together."

Cannon's not afraid to tee it up with the boys, either, which is a fringe benefit of her job. She did so after the Cactus and Pine's spring meeting with Smith and two other golfers at the Phoenician Resort in Scottsdale. Cannon held her own.

## Bio-Bash

**L**eave it to those wacky folks at the Madison (Wis.) *Capital Times* to raise the specter of "Frankenturf" in opposition to the eventual introduction of genetically modified turfgrass.

A July 14 editorial takes Scotts Co. to task for its efforts to bring Roundup

Ready grasses to America's lawns. It cites a Rutgers academic who is working with Marysville, Ohio-based Scotts to develop "a luminescent gene that would make (lawns) glow." This, according to the paper, would contribute to light pollution. "Imagine," the paper said, "what it would be like if everyone's grass is sending out an

eerie green or purple glow."

The paper also quotes that famously objective scientist, Jeremy Rifkin, as saying that genetically modified turf would put "biotech in everyone's backyard." Rifkin is, perhaps, best known for his assertion that vegetarianism should be mandated because methane emissions from beef cattle (i.e., cow

farts) will destroy the ozone layer.

A bemused but irritated Scotts official said flatly that the company is not working with the Rutgers academic and has no interest in creating glow-in-the-dark lawns. As for Rifkin, the Scotts official suggested that he should refocus his attention on the rear ends of cows.



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Circle No. 112

## Off The Fringe

# By the Book

CLEAR POLICIES – FOR EVERYONE – MAKE LIFE AND WORK A PLEASANT EXPERIENCE AT J.C. RESORTS

By Don Dale

**T**he holistic management strategy practiced by J.C. Resorts, a La Jolla, Calif.-based hotel and golf resort company, is designed to make life and work both easy and fun for all — including golf course maintenance employees and the resort's clientele.

J.C. Resorts achieves this with a written program on complete golf course management. It starts with the corporation's core values and extends to employee communications and purchasing practices.

"We try to keep everything uniform and standardized," says Kent Graff, director of golf course maintenance for the company, who oversees five courses within a 40-mile radius of Rancho Bernardo, Calif.

The corporation's management program centers on effective communication, beginning at the top and extending to newly hired members of the five maintenance crews. A combination of staff meetings and informal, one-on-one impromptu gatherings are key, but training manuals outline guidelines to ensure the company's customers a quality golfing experience.

"The idea is to train our staff initially, and then we reinforce training at weekly or monthly tailgate meetings," Graff says.

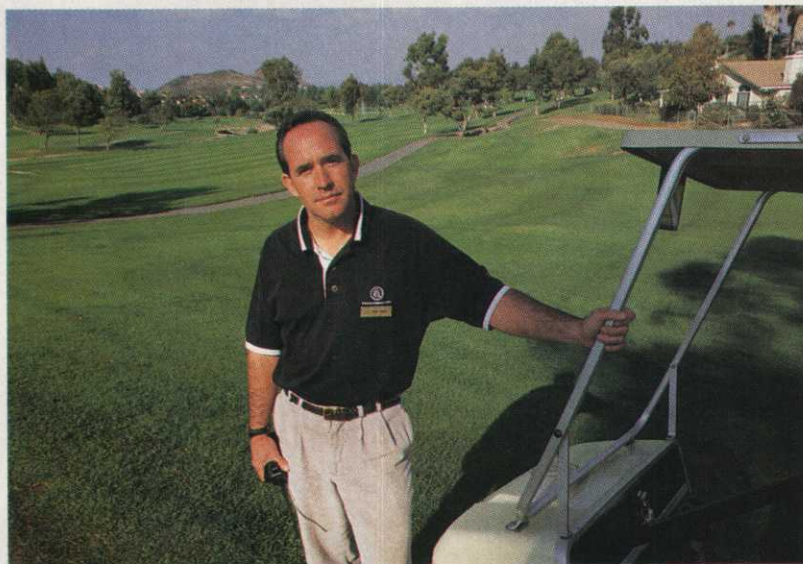
An employee standards manual deals with issues ranging from how to associate with resort guests to details about turfgrass maintenance. It's just as important to the economic life of a resort to greet a guest in a friendly manner as it is to know how to maintain the course, according to the company manual.

"The manual is intended to be an encompassing how-to guide," Graff says.

### Corporate culture

Crew members aren't the only ones turning to manuals to get a better understanding of their roles in the overall operation. Superintendents can quickly pick up insight into the corporate culture and operational structure.

"We have a manager's quick-reference manual that helps outline certain ways to process work, including proper procedures for memo writing, distribution and correct training procedures," Graff says.



"One of the nice things about our organization is that we try to pool our ideas rather than dictate them," says Kent Graff, director of golf course maintenance.

Although Graff has had business training and experience, he and other superintendents say it's handy to have reference materials that outline specifics of many managerial functions. Quarterly corporate committee meetings bolster communication and allow superintendents to represent their courses, as well as work closely with supervisors.

### Delegating authority

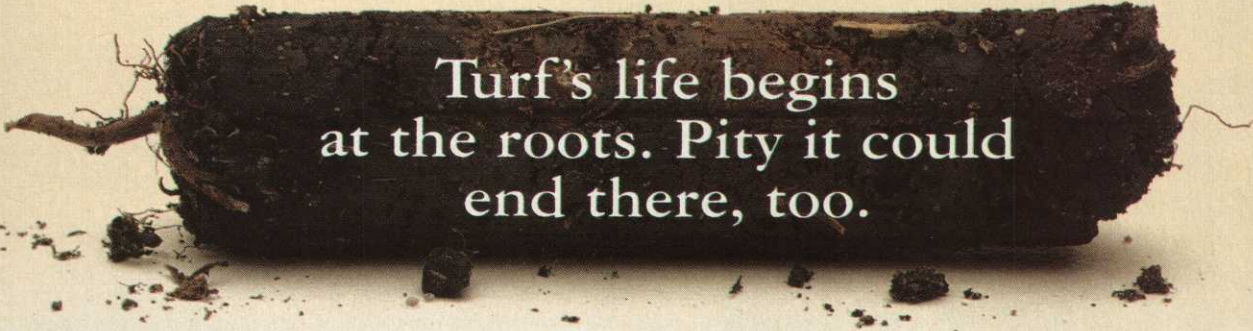
J.C. Resorts gives superintendents at the other courses considerable autonomy, allowing them to address maintenance challenges as they see fit. They are entrusted with the care of their courses, construction and other projects, but can turn to others for advice.

"My role is as a mentor or person to assist with large purchases and capital expenditures," Graff says. "One of the nice things about our organization is that we try to pool our ideas rather than dictate them."

But Graff keeps in close touch with fellow superintendents through monthly meetings to address issues ranging from wages and staff development to course maintenance details or project work. "It could be about a process of aeration or a particular turf cultural practice that is working in our favor," he says.

Graff also works with superintendents to assess needs so he can negotiate bulk purchasing discounts.

*Don Dale is a freelance writer from Hollywood, Calif.*



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## Pristine Seventeen

For only the third time, and sadly the last, Robert Trent Jones Sr. and his son, Robert Trent Jones Jr., teamed up to design a golf course – Southern Highlands GC in Las Vegas. The 7,381-yard, par-72 track opened in April, and Jones Sr. died in June.

“I truly believe their commitment to Southern Highlands resulted in one of the finest golf course designs in the nation,” says Garry Goett, president of the club.

The course, located about 10 minutes from the Las Vegas strip, combines elements of classic and modern design. It features nearly 18 acres of streams, lakes and waterfalls, including on the 17th hole.

No. 17 is a challenging par 3 – it’s 214 yards from the back tee with water flowing from there all the way around the peninsula green. Bunkers protect the front right and left green, so there’s little room for error.

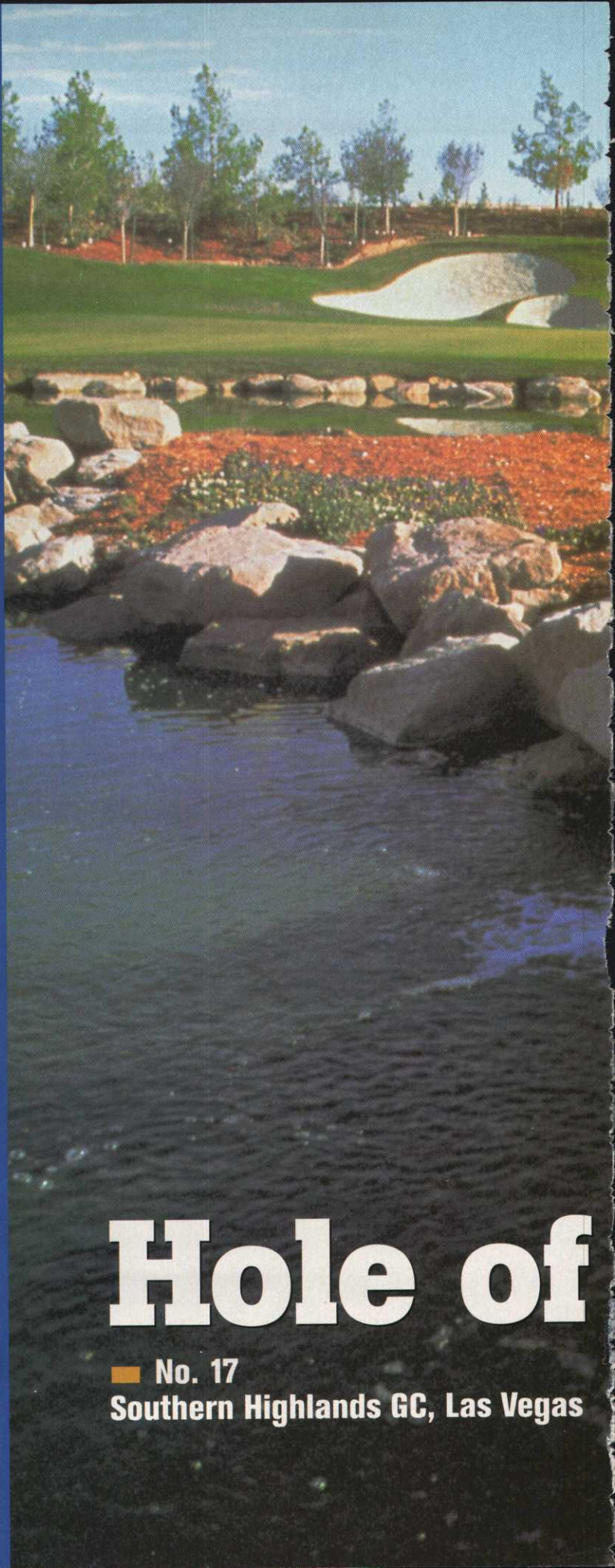
Southern Highlands is in the able hands of Riley Stottern, a CGCS with more than 35 years of experience. Stottern, previously superintendent at Casa Blanca GC in Mesquite, Nev., knew Jones Sr. for several years and worked with him and Jones Jr. during the building of Southern Highlands. The No. 12 green at the course was the last green Jones Sr. ever designed, Stottern notes.

“He did so much for the game,” Stottern says of Jones Sr.. “He was one of the true gentleman of golf and a great ally to superintendents. We had him a long time, and we should appreciate that.”

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# Hole of

■ No. 17

Southern Highlands GC, Las Vegas



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Circle No 114





# Shades Of Green

■ OPINION

**I** used to think that HOC meant “height of cut.” Recently, I’m convinced it means “height of conceit. Greenspeeds with HOCs of .09 inches are being bandied about by superintendents, like kids bragging about how fast their cars go. Didn’t anybody teach them that speed kills?

GCSAA spends tons of money trying to portray superintendents as responsible adults. But superintendents’ grass-cutting hormones are still going through high-speed puberty. Whose fault is it anyway? Is it some sort of recessive gene that makes superintendents take these risks? Or is it club officials or “influential golfers” who are driving the fast-greens express?

If clubs, or God forbid superintendents, are using the Stimpmeter as a speedometer, then they flunk Golf 101. Every good turf-grass manager knows that Mr. Stimpson was looking for consistency with his invention, not speed.

Don’t take my word for it that speed can kill, just look along the roadside. Speed limits are posted for safety and survival reasons.

Being human, we all have put the pedal to the metal at some point and gotten away with it — even if we knew we were taking chances. It’s like grooming greens for a major event. You can push them to the limit for a few days, but you’d better slow down soon after. If you keep ignoring the road signs and keep taking chances, there’s a good chance you and your greens could crash.

Big egos can lead to road rage, and there’s the old argument that you’ve never heard of a superintendent being fired for fast greens. But offenders beware because the warning signs are there for good reasons. Of course, heeding them is a matter of self-discipline and common sense.

**Dips and bumps** — Golf course designers need to play traffic engineers with course owners and superintendents. The blueprints should show maximum allowable speeds for the contours of the greens.

Donald Ross never envisioned .09 inches. Otherwise, he never would have buried those elephants under his greens. At these heights and speeds, watch out for scalping.

## Don’t Get Caught in the Speed Trap

BY JOEL JACKSON



SOME  
SUPERINTENDENTS'  
GRASS-CUTTING  
HORMONES ARE  
STILL GOING  
THROUGH HIGH-  
SPEED PUBERTY

**Slippery when wet** — Algae loves stressed-out greens. If you keep them short when it’s cloudy and wet for a few days, the slime will grow quicker than the turf. Better back off that accelerator — I mean, Stimpmeter — because you and the greens will live longer.

**Divided highway** — The great dichotomy of turf management is grooming turf for low handicappers on one side and high handicappers on the other.

A friend, who’s a superintendent, conducted a greenspeed study. Instead of keeping up with the Joneses and playing the fast greens game, he focused on smooth and consistent greens. The members’ handicaps improved three to four strokes. Of course, nobody brags about smooth greens, and boasting that your greens are rolling 10 seems to be more important than playing to par and enjoying the game.

**Congested area** — Making greens fast means slope and contour are exaggerated and pin locations shrink to a few areas on each green. That means foot traffic and wear are intensified in those areas. If you seek relief by moving the pin to a crowned area, you’ll get raked over the coals for using an unfair location. Slow down, and you’ll find more usable areas.

**Speed limit** — Of course there’s no limit, at least not one that the police can enforce. But consider the concept of speed limits: The highest speeds are allowed only on open, flat and straight stretches of highway. When obstacles, curves, hills, wet pavement, congested areas are present, the prudent and wise thing to do is to slow down.

That goes equally for you and the turf.

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*Joel Jackson, CGCS, retired from Disney’s golf division in 1997 and is director of communications for the Florida GCSA.*

# The Great Spec

## Don't be afraid to try California greens



BY MICHAEL J. HURDZAN

A common misconception is that any 100-percent sand green is a California green. That's like saying all red automobiles are Ferraris because they all have four wheels.

I agree with my colleague Jim Moore that the green is the most important part of the golf course, and the USGA method is the most highly studied method available. But I don't believe there is any one best way to build a green.

My point of view has been shaped by more than 40 years of seeing greens built out of every imaginable combination of sand, organic matter, inorganic matter and soil — and all of them produce acceptable putting surfaces. Consequently, I believe the preferred method is the one best suited to any given combination of microclimate, irrigation water source, turfgrass, construction budget, maintenance goal and golfer expectations, and it is not always the USGA method. As we learn more about the complex interactions of the physical, biological and chemical aspects of green root zones, more scientifically sound construction methods or modifications will be found successful. One such formula is the California method.

A common misconception is that any 100-percent sand green is

a California green. That's like saying all red automobiles are Ferraris because they all have four wheels. The difference for greens, as with cars, is in the details.

I also often hear about California greens that have failed. When I hear such claims, I ask the same two questions and I almost always get the same answers.

"Where is this green, for I would like to see it?" I ask innocently. The response is usually, "I'm not sure." By now, I'm fairly sure what's going on, but I ask the second question.

"What certified lab performed the sand analysis and quality-control testing?" I ask. The person usually says either, "I don't know," or "The sand wasn't tested."

From those two answers, I deduce that this failed green may only be a rumor. If it actually exists, it may not have been properly built to California recommendations. On the other hand, I can direct you to thousands of properly built California greens all over North America that grew in fast and that superintendents love because they are easy to care for.

No construction method can guarantee against short-term turfgrass failure, but you can avoid failure by following a few steps before recommending the root-zone architecture. Sources

*Continued on page 32*