

There's a lot of work that goes into keeping a golf course in nice condition."

Kastler often accompanies her husband on evening rides around the course. Tom takes time to explain potential problems related to the turf.

"Getting involved is a good thing," Lacy says. "I know what Tom is up against every day. I understand his job better and why he has to dash out at 11 p.m. some nights if there are problems."

Dickerson has taken an interest in golf course maintenance since she began dating Mooney. "I understand the love he has for his job," she says.

The other half also says it's good to be married to men who enjoy their jobs. Superintendents, who are known to love their work, may be physically tired and mentally exhausted after working 10 straight days, but they don't come home complaining about work.

Batchelor says Jason never complains about his job and rarely comes home grumpy. Lucini says Brian comes home from work happy, which makes her happy.

Tough people

Although there are no statistics to verify it, wives have heard there's a high divorce rate among superintendents. But it doesn't scare them.

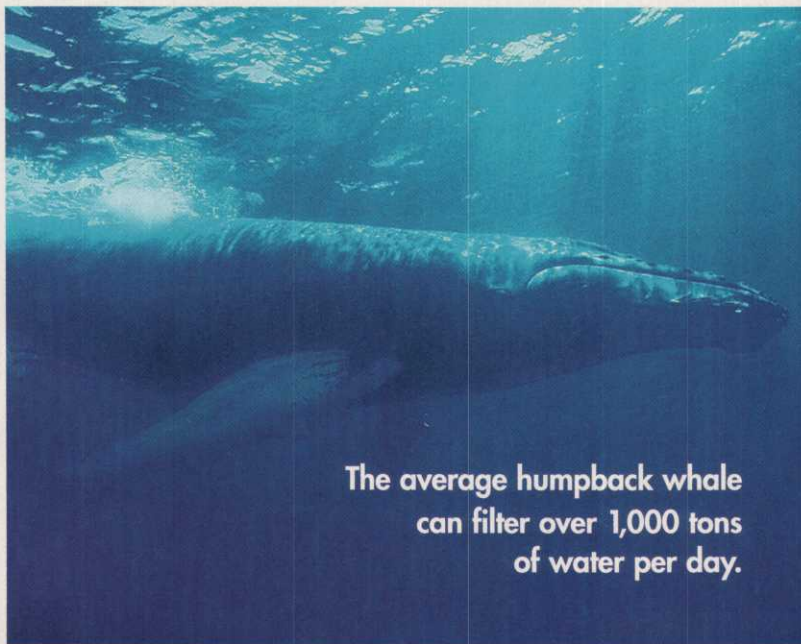
"Jason isn't going anywhere, and neither am I," Batchelor says. "I don't think I'll get tired of putting up with his job."

Dickerson, who will wed Mooney next year, realizes that being married to a superintendent will be a challenge, but she's confident their marriage will be a happy one. Taking advice from Sims, Dickerson says it's simply matter of getting their priorities in order to make it work.

"I live by the motto: Tough times don't last; tough people do," Dickerson says. "Whatever I commit to, I always give 110 percent. It will be the same with our marriage. I love this superintendent and all that comes with him." ■

Aylward, the author of this story, can be reached at lalward@advanstar.com

Jennifer Mongeluzo is a woman in a man's world, but she plans to make her mark as a superintendent. See page 32.



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W

She's a Woman in a Man's World

But Jennifer Mongeluzo plans on making her mark as a superintendent

BY ROBIN SUTTELL

IN "ANOTHER LIFETIME," she worked on New York's Seventh Avenue designing and marketing shoes for some of the biggest names in footwear fashion.

But Jennifer Mongeluzo admits that the hard-working life of a superintendent beats that of a Manhattan yuppie a hundred times over. That's why the 31-year-old went back to school last September to learn the superintendent's trade.

"I was miserable in the city," she says of the time she spent working in Manhattan from 1992 to 1998. "I felt like a caged animal."

Mongeluzo, a New Jersey native, will finish her studies at Rutgers University's turf school next year. She's now getting on-the-job training as an intern at Sunningdale CC in

Westchester, N.Y., under the tutelage of superintendent Sean Cain and his staff.

The fact that Mongeluzo has come to the industry at a later age after first having a traditional office career is unusual. The fact that she's a woman increases this novelty.

The GCSAA roster reveals that 157 women belong to the organization, a little more than 1 percent of its roughly 15,000 members of Class A, B and C superintendents. As such a minority, women obviously face challenges of breaking into the male-dominated profession.

"I went in a bit naive," Mongeluzo admits. "I thought it would be like any other job I've had, but I realize that I'm the only female in the room many times. I walked into my first lecture at Rutgers in a room filled with 80 guys



PHOTOS BY JULES ALEXANDER

and only one other woman. I just kept reminding myself to take a couple of deep breaths. I knew I could do it.”

Mongeluzo is no stranger to the golf course. Prior to joining the Rutgers program last year, she spent more than two years working on the grounds crew at the Snowmass Club in Aspen, Colo. She went to Colorado in 1998 after leaving the footwear fashion industry and Manhattan. An avid golfer, she took the job because one of its perks included daily tee times, and she couldn't afford the greens fees in the pricey resort town.

“[The job] turned out to be something I loved,” she says. “It became much more than just a job to me.”

She credits the superintendent there, Alan Ogren, with giving her the motivation to jump into her new career choice. Calling him an “incredible mentor,” Mongeluzo says Ogren set her in the direction to return to school. She remembers him telling her repeatedly, “You can do this.”

Ogren says he never doubted Mongeluzo's abilities. It was obvious from the start she had a passion not only for golf but also for the job.

“She beat down my door for the job,” he recalls. “When she came to work, she was totally excited about golf. She has an eye for the golf course, and that's key. You really need to have an eye to see how the golf course is going to work. By the end, she was teaching some of the guys.”

Thanks to Ogren's encouragement and after some soul searching, Mongeluzo enrolled in Rutgers' turf program last summer to start the fall 2001 semester. She packed her belongings, said goodbye to her adopted state of Colorado, and drove cross-country back to the East Coast and her family on Sept. 10. She planned to return to the mountains after graduation.

She woke up the next morning and found that everything had changed.

“I had always figured I'd go back to Colorado once I got my degree. I had even considered

Continued on page 34

“I thought it would be like any other job I've had, but I realized I'm the only female in the room many times.”

— JENNIFER MONGELUZO

Woman in a Man's World

Continued from page 33

doing my internship out there," she says. "After Sept. 11, I decided to stay in the area."

The events of Sept. 11 made her re-examine her priorities, specifically her family life. Her decision to stay in the New York area brought her to Sunningdale after an arduous search for an internship in the tri-state area. Like other students in the Rutgers program, she sent out dozens of résumés. She received only one phone call requesting she come in for an interview — from Cain at Sunningdale. Mongeluzo had previously walked the course there and knew Cain's second assistant, Dave Ryan, who also attends Rutgers.

In the highly competitive metro New York market, it's tough to get solid intern. The bigger, high-prestige courses snap them up. Cain didn't care if his intern was male or female. He just wanted someone who would do excellent work and take his or her responsibilities seriously. Mongeluzo appeared to be the person from the moment she walked through the door.

"She came to the interview professional, confident and driven," Cain says. "You could tell she was focused and knew what she wanted to do."

Cain checked her references and called Ogren at Snowmass, who gave Mongeluzo an excellent recommendation. That finalized his decision to hire her.

"I want someone who comes in here and has the goal to be in my chair someday," Cain says. "I want someone who wants to become a superintendent."

Despite Cain's enthusiasm over his new hire, not all staff members were convinced Mongeluzo was the right person for the job. She's petite — standing only 5-foot-3 and weighing what she calls "a buck fifteen." Her look is one that's definitively feminine.

Consequently, Sunningdale technician Joe Repanti wasn't convinced she could hold her own in the shop or on the greens. In fact, he admits he really didn't buy into the idea that any

woman was cut out for heavy golf course labor.

"My old golf course thought about bringing a woman onto the greens crew, and I was the first one to shoot it down," he says. "I was against it. I had never worked on a golf course with a girl before. I wasn't too open-minded about it."

When Cain told Repanti that Mongeluzo would be joining the team, he says he was at a loss for words. "My first thought was, 'Oh God, what are we in for?'" he recalls.

Because Mongeluzo started work at Sunningdale in January, she immediately joined Repanti in the maintenance shop for her first few days on the job. He ran her through the basics of servicing carryalls and soon realized she performed the work quickly — changing oil, air filters and spark plugs with competence.

"I've run into many guys that weren't such quick studies," Repanti says. "I just didn't think a woman would want to come in here next to me and jump in and get dirty. She has given me a different opinion. She doesn't give up. She holds her ground. She does her job, and she does it well."

Mongeluzo says Repanti has been an inspiration to her.

"Joe has never looked at me as other than someone who wants to learn," she says. "I'm thankful for being treated as an equal."

Cain says Mongeluzo earned respect.

"After her first week here, all of my guys gained complete respect for her," he says. "She handles a shovel and works just as hard as my other employees."

Even with her obvious success on the Sunningdale team, Mongeluzo still faces an uphill climb both at Rutgers and in the career that follows. The studying is a breeze, she says. It's the mental stuff that comes with being one of the only women in a lecture hall that sometimes brings her down.

She expects to continue being the brunt of jibes and jokes at school and to be the subject of whispered conversations in rooms full



*"No one has ever stopped me from doing what I wanted.
I'm a determined individual."*

— JENNIFER MONGELUZO

of men. She hates to use the word "exclusionary," but sadly that's the first phrase that comes to her mind, she says.

"I'm a woman sitting in class with people who are acting like we're in junior high school rather than a respected college program," she says. "It's like someone is sitting behind me pulling my pigtails."

She admits there are days when she feels like giving up. She's had guys come up to her at school — ones from the same program and classes she in — and ask her what she does on the golf course.

"I want to say, 'Oh, I do some needlepoint and . . . hmmm . . . a little cooking for the boys when they come in at lunch time. What do you think I do? The same thing as you,'" she says. "I never thought I'd be looked at differently because I'm a woman. It's 2002. No one has ever stopped me from doing what I wanted. I'm a determined individual. It's strange for me to feel like this."

She says she's surprised that only a few men in the industry have been supportive. But those who

are supportive have been terrific, and she says she's thankful for that. Because of that, Mongeluzo has decided to lend that same kind of support to other women entering the field. She says she'll keep pulling for the women in the industry.

"It's not about me being here," she says. "It's about every woman who tries to come through after me. I'm not going to give up — ever. Not after going through what I have been through."

She pauses for a moment.

"Besides, I'm crazy about watching grass grow," she laughs. "There was a time when I didn't even consider golf a sport. Then I picked up a club, and it changed my entire life. I have a long road ahead of me, and I'm sure there are going to be plenty more challenges. I'm going to have to do much more, work harder and be that much better than the men to keep things good for the women coming in behind me."

"I've finally come to the place where I need to be. It took awhile, but I'm happy about it." ■

Suttell is a free-lance writer from Lakewood, Ohio.

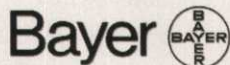
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There are so many new design terms that mean so little, and they keep rearing their ugly heads at courses throughout the land. A modern classic is the notion of giving a golf course “strength.” The Augusta folks loved falling back on this one in 2002 to justify the boring mess they created.

Strength sounds so manly, so masculine and so tough. It’s a touch of NASCAR in Augusta. But what *does* it mean to give a golf course strength? Is “strength” actually length? And if it is, wouldn’t you just say, “We gave the course length?”

I vote for “strength” masquerading as a subtle way of saying, “We really aren’t sure what we’re doing. But we do know we don’t like to see some rich, talented, young stud hitting a 330-yard drive under extreme pressure and making a heroic birdie in front of millions. So we’re going to strengthen our resolve, protect our egos and strengthen the odds against that happening again.”

Another favorite started by Hootie and his blowfish that has sadly spread down to other golf courses is another ego-based design concept — “We’re putting a premium on accuracy.” It sounds so noble, so wise and so proper. But it’s really only an excuse for tightening fairways, shrinking greens and generally making players hit shots where the committee wants them to go so that scoring doesn’t get out of hand.

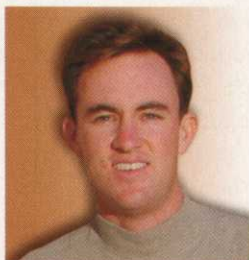
Sound a bit controlling? It is because there’s a big difference between putting a premium on accuracy and what they’re really doing, which is putting a premium on straightness. *Anyone* can make a golf course difficult by determining a center line of play and forcing players to follow it.

What is tricky and rare in modern golf is the notion of genuinely putting a premium on accurate *and* well-thought-out shots. But the evaluation of any golf course setup these days, whether it’s a major championship site or the club member/guest, is sadly based on numbers. The premium has bypassed straightness or accuracy and jumped right to scoring.

After all, if a player is accurate, wouldn’t he be able to break par and then some on a well-designed course? Nope. High scores are the sign of a successful setup.

Putting a Premium On Shallowness

BY GEOFF SHACKELFORD



ANYONE CAN MAKE A
COURSE DIFFICULT
BY DETERMINING
A CENTER LINE OF
PLAY AND FORCING
PLAYERS TO
FOLLOW IT

Confusing isn’t it? Actually, it’s shallow and lame more than anything else.

Throw into this mix the rapid changes in technology, the unbelievable improvements in turf consistency on tournament courses and the battle to put a premium on scoring, and it just gets goofier by the day. People are better at the game, and they have instruments that make them score better. Courses are so well-maintained that bad breaks are minimal.

Yet fairways keep shrinking on many courses, tees keep going back and, like robots, young golfers are learning to hit their balls long and straight, chase them, and hit them long and straight again. Not only is that boring to watch, it’s boring to play. When it seeps down to everyday courses, it makes golfers want to become bowlers.

A genuine premium on accuracy means a course asks golfers to maneuver their way around in a various ways, placing their shots on the left side for a good view of the back-right hole location. Genuine accuracy is “tested” (another dreaded modern day buzz word) by asking players to tackle a par 3 at 220 yards one day, and then making them play it from a 158 yards the next day — with a different pin position.

But that kind of flexibility and potential vulnerability in a course might put a premium on creativity. It would also put a premium on humility because, after all, someone might score well and the people in charge would have to deal with the awful humiliation of a low score.

But in the big scheme of life, someone who posts a good score is not committing a crime against humanity. In fact, it’s a great accomplishment. A good score puts a premium on fun, excitement and talent — premiums that in modern golf seem tough for way too many folks to deal with.

Golfdom Contributing Editor Geoff Shackelford can be reached at geoffshackelford@aol.com



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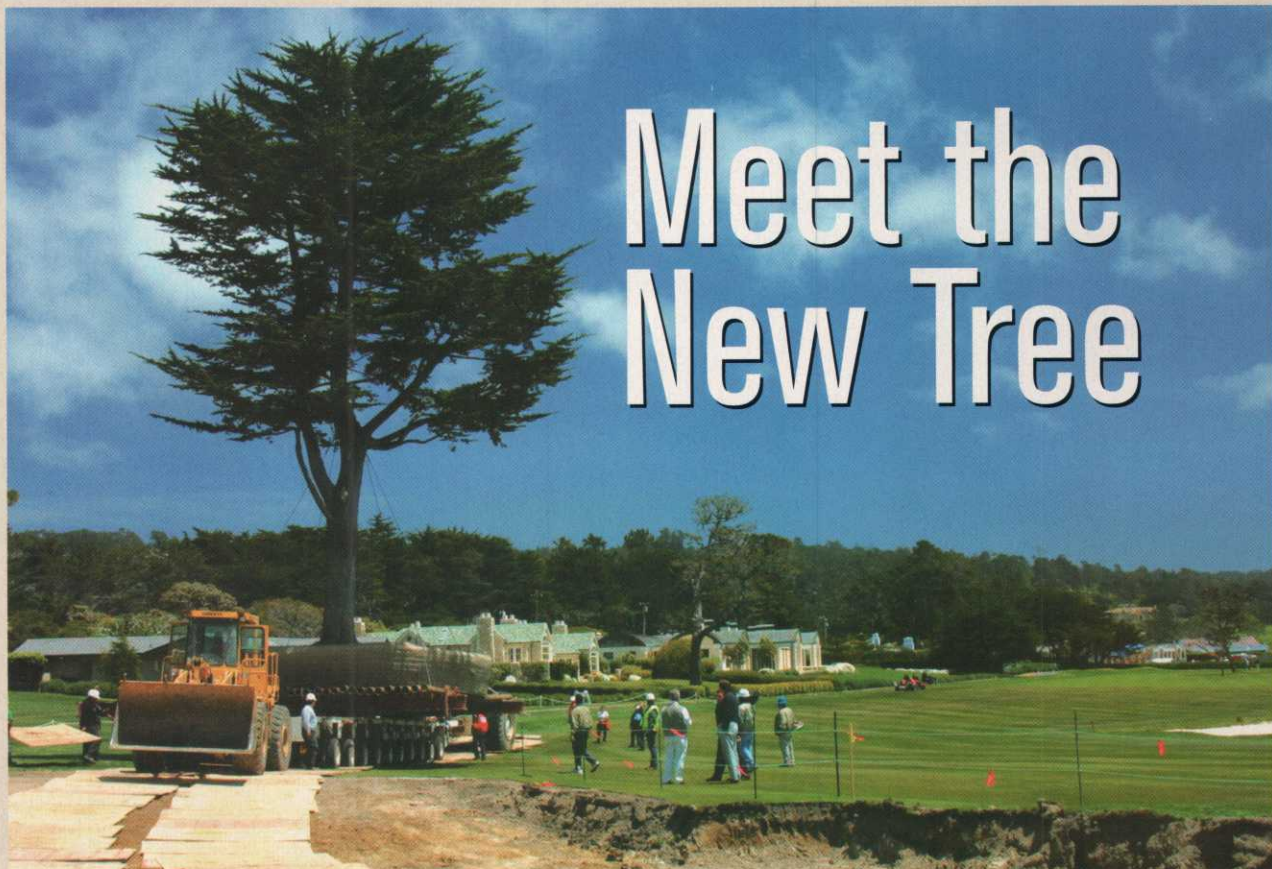
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Meet the New Tree

Cypress is a fine replacement for famed pine on 18th hole at Pebble Beach Golf Links

BY LARRY AYLWARD, EDITOR

Problem

The famous tree on the 18th hole at Pebble Beach Golf Links died and had to be taken down. But without the tree, the hole played much easier.

Solution

Put a new tree in to put some bite back into the hole. But the *real* solution was finding the perfect tree. R.J. Harper, Pebble Beach's vice president of golf course operations, found it during a round of golf.

Crack! With a nasty lightning bolt and a booming crash, Mother Nature scarred the distinguished face of the 18th hole at Pebble Beach Golf Links.

It happened during a winter thunderstorm in January 1999, when lightning struck the prized 80-foot pine tree adorning the front of the 18th green. Less than two years later, the spectacular tree — which had thrived on the acclaimed course since its opening in 1919 — was dead.

The lightning strike weakened the tree's immune system. So when the tree contracted pitch canker disease three months later, it couldn't recover.

A fungus called *Fusarium circinatum* that affects pine trees mainly in central

coastal California causes pitch canker disease. The pine at Pebble degenerated quickly when bark beetles spread the disease throughout the tree. Its needles began to yellow and wilt. When the disease spread to its canopy, the tree's end was near.

The pine fought the disease for about 20 months before succumbing to it in 2000.

The problem

The 545-yard 18th hole at Pebble Beach is arguably the greatest finishing hole in golf. Waves crash along the hole's left edge and seagulls soar above the rocky coast. The hole and its view are for the ages — and the towering pine provided an important hazard to the hole and comprised a vivid part of the view.

It's understandable why *anyone* would be nervous about tampering with *anything* on the famed hole that might affect its playability and panorama. But the dead tree, with its brittle branches and decaying trunk, had become a danger to golfers. In

August 2001, Pebble Beach course officials decided to remove the tree.

"It was a beautiful pine tree with historical significance," says R.J. Harper, Pebble Beach's vice president of golf course operations. "It deflected a lot of shots for many years. We hated to see it go."

But Harper and his staff, including superintendent Tom Huesgen, had no choice.

"Golf courses are evolutionary, particularly old courses with trees that can die from old age, disease and storms," Harper says. "You have to be prepared for these things."

The pine was removed piece by piece. "We couldn't just drop it because it was so close to the green and the fairway," Huesgen says.

The tree's absence left more than a gaping hole near the green. Experts evaluated the playability of the hole after the pine was gone and agreed there was a problem: The hole played much easier without the tree.

Over the years, the tree caused havoc for many players, from pros to hacks. The tree could get in their heads and make them think about

hitting left, which brought the ocean and its crashing waves into play. With the tree not looming in the distance, golfers third and second shots were duck soup.

"The tree was a formidable obstacle and affected how you played the hole," Harper says. "Without the tree, you could bang your ball anywhere and not have to think about it."

The solution

Harper, Huesgen and the other experts gathered to discuss what to do to put the bite back into the hole. They talked about replacing the tree with a grove of smaller trees. They considered building bunkers on the right side of the green and tightening the fairway. They even spoke of using an artificial tree to replace the pine.

But most everyone involved in the decision agreed that a real tree — similar in size and presence to the old tree — was the best solution to the problem. They just had to find it.

Pebble Beach hired Environmental Design, a Houston-based company specializing in large tree relocation

Continued on page 40

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The Honors Course is a private golf club owned by Jack Lupton. Mr. Lupton is a member of several of the most famous clubs in the country.

In the mid-1990s, many clubs were beginning to ban metal spikes. Although Mr. Lupton started wearing plastic cleats early on, he was reluctant to tell members at The Honors Course what they could or could not wear.

One Sunday morning, Mr. Lupton, his wife, Alice (both were wearing Softspikes cleats that day) and a woman friend wearing metal spikes, teed off early. They were the first golfers on every green.

Mr. Lupton said the woman could not have weighed more than 100 pounds, yet she left spike marks every place she stepped. She saw how badly she was tracking up the greens and made a special effort to pick up her feet as she walked. Still, she still left spike marks everywhere.

Mr. Lupton called me the next morning to tell me he had just written a letter to the members banning metal spikes.

He said that since he seldom played so early he had no idea that the problems associated with metal spikes were so bad. The letter was sent and we have never looked back.

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The move required some heavy-duty equipment, including this truck to haul wood so workers could create a road for the vehicles transporting the tree.

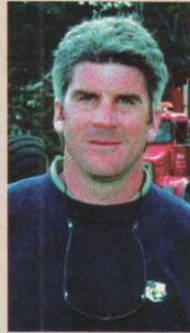
Real-Life Solutions

Continued from page 39 and preservation, to help with the project. A few things were certain:

- The old tree wouldn't be replaced with another pine tree because it would also be susceptible to pitch canker disease, for which there's no known cure, Harper says.

- The replacement tree should come from nearby, preferably the course, because trees should never be replanted far from their original locations. That way the tree would have a better chance for survival.

One morning a few months ago, Harper was playing the course, and he shanked his ball far right and out of play on the first hole. When he went to look for his ball, he saw it — a big, beautiful cypress tree that he was cer-



It was Tom Huesgen's job to make sure the course wouldn't be damaged during the tree's move.

tain would be the perfect replacement. Harper was right. The tree wouldn't have to be moved far and would have a strong chance for survival.

In early May, the cypress was removed and prepared for moving. Environmental Design used the "round-ball" method to relocate the tree. The tree's 30-foot wide and 4-foot deep root system was encapsulated in cloth.

"The move required some heavy-duty equipment," Harper says, noting that three cranes, an 80-foot-long flatbed truck, hydraulic lifts and other machinery were used for the moving project, held May 16 and 17.

It was Huesgen's job to ensure the course wouldn't be significantly damaged during the move of the 80-foot and 400,000-pound tree.

"Routing was key," Huesgen says. "We had to determine the best routes to get the equipment and the tree through the golf course without stopping play and damaging the course."

The area the tree traveled was not watered for a week before the move to firm up the turf. Workers created a road from 1-inch thick plywood so the three vehicles transporting the tree — two front loaders and the flatbed truck — could move safely without tearing up the course and damaging the irrigation system's main line, which the caravan crossed five times.

A lifting platform was created, and the tree was hoisted by crane and placed on the flatbed truck, which had 80 wheels and 10 axles. When the truck moved over the slightest uneven terrain, its hydraulics functioned to level the flatbed. "The tree moved to whatever surface it was traveling," Harper says.

IN A PERFECT WORLD
THERE'D BE NO
BROWN
PATCH.