

I call it the Cobweb Club. So often, I hear contractors and even superintendents say over and over, "But that's the way we've always done it." I admit that when I hear those words, I stop listening and start looking for a way to remove the dust.

Sometimes, I'm the guy who gets the call to mediate between historical precepts and determined advancement. Often, these discussions aren't friendly.

There are ways to do things, which are "field choice" type things, wherein no one really cares how something is accomplished — as long as the end result is there, such as leveling a sprinkler head, trenching a main line or cutting cups. There are various ways to skin these cats, but often the end result doesn't dictate a change in technique as long as it is done on time and done well.

Certainly the devil is in the details, and there is no substitute for quality control to make sure the end result is the correct one.

Recent advancements in drainage materials and techniques, selection and use of turf-grass varieties, construction equipment options and several other areas give us options to explore. Simply put, those who do explore are going to get ahead.

Field choice is one thing, but cutting the edge is another and that means examining our methods and always trying to do better.

In the mid-1980s, when I was cutting my teeth in construction, it was rare to see an excavator (track hoe) on a job site that did anything but trench work and rough construction. Dozers did the majority of the shaping. But this subset of equipment has come so far in options and ability that recently I've had discussions about not using anything but track hoes to shape.

Part of that is because in order to get what the architect is looking for, the well-run track hoe can build the feature better than anything else. I hate it when I hear corporate monkey speakisms, such as "thinking outside of the box," but the truth is that is exactly what examples like this represent.

I could go on and on citing example after

A Club You Don't Want to Join

BY DAVE WILBER



WE OWE IT TO OUR
CLIENTS TO LOOK
AT EVERY POSSIBLE
WAY TO AVOID THE
SAME OLD WAY

example about how progress is upon us in construction and renovation. In fact, I've had the opportunity to discuss and study many construction methods of the past. Some of them are so darned amazing that we really do wonder why we gave them up.

I sure would have liked being there when dozers were first brought to the job site that was the domain of horsepower provided by real-live, hay-burning animals. The fact is that evolution is interesting, except when you find yourself making buggy whips when automobiles are the new vogue.

Today, we are being asked to do really unique and different things. New construction is often seen as a degree of competition and renovation work often seeks to update a facility for many right (and sometimes wrong) reasons.

Because of those expectations and simple progress in general, we owe it to our clients to look at every possible way to avoid the same old way only because "that's the way we do it." We also owe it to ourselves to be discerning enough to know when we're looking at snake oil or perhaps a real innovation.

The Cobweb Club is nothing about age, and everything about attitude. Check yourself. Are you doing it "just because" or is that method really the bomb?

If someone asks you to do something a bit different than usual, can you keep the dust off your shoulders by giving it a try?

And if you are the one asking for a better way, have you really done your homework?

Dave Wilber, an independent soil consultant and agronomic advisor, can be reached at davewilber@soil.com



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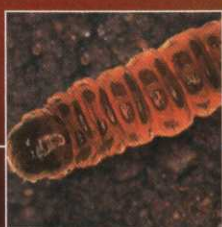
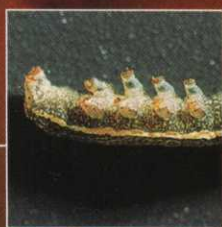
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The Islanders

The hassles are large for the small group of superintendents who tend turf on tiny territories surrounded by water. But they wouldn't want to be anywhere else

STORY AND PHOTOS BY ANTHONY PIOPPi

While it may be true that no man is an island, don't try telling that to the handful of superintendents in the United States whose only lifeline to the world is a ferry.

For this small number of superintendents who ply their trade on tiny pieces of land only accessible by watercraft, even the most mundane of activities, such as ordering a replacement part, can turn into an ordeal. Consider:

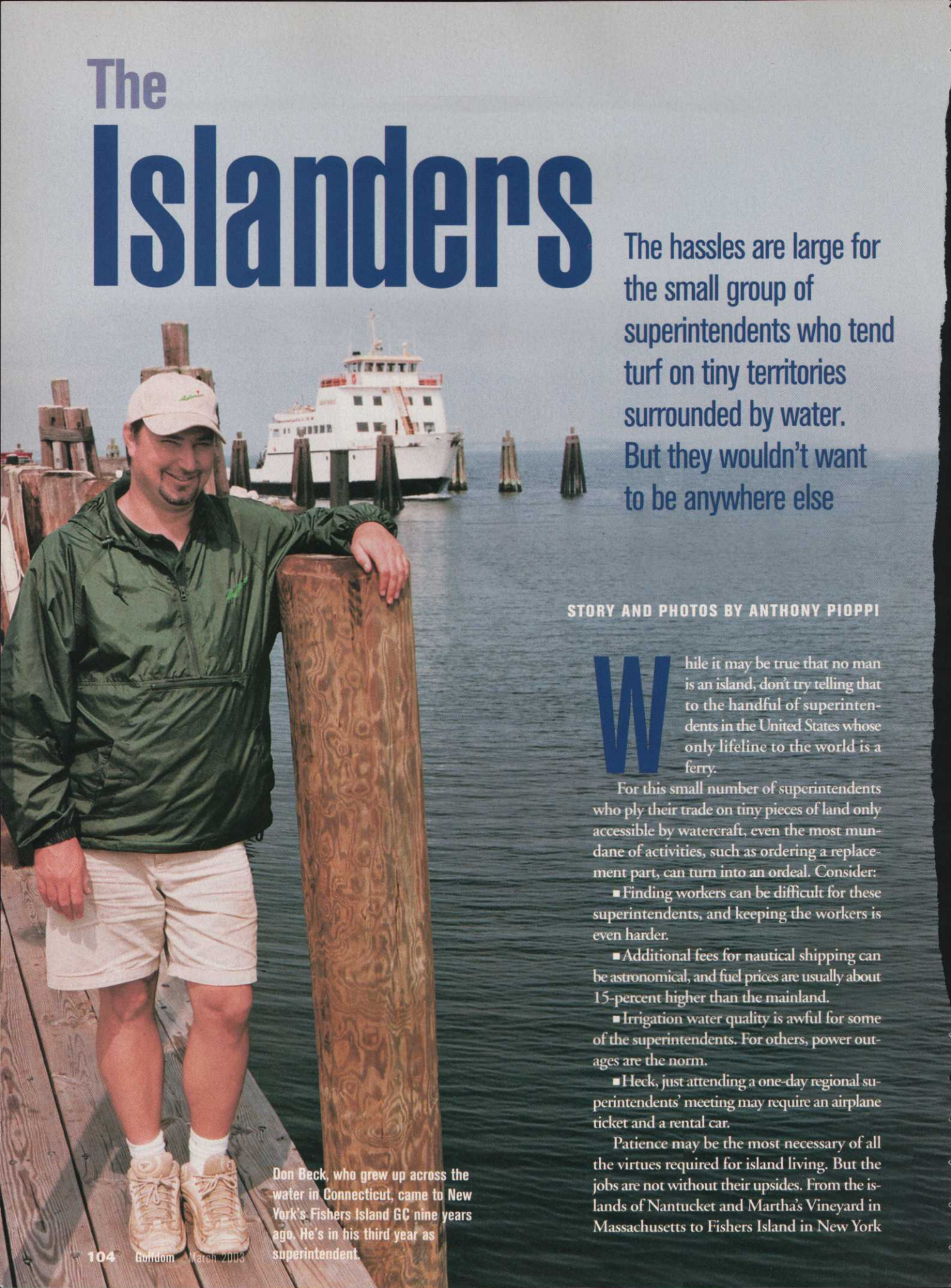
- Finding workers can be difficult for these superintendents, and keeping the workers is even harder.

- Additional fees for nautical shipping can be astronomical, and fuel prices are usually about 15-percent higher than the mainland.

- Irrigation water quality is awful for some of the superintendents. For others, power outages are the norm.

- Heck, just attending a one-day regional superintendents' meeting may require an airplane ticket and a rental car.

Patience may be the most necessary of all the virtues required for island living. But the jobs are not without their upsides. From the islands of Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard in Massachusetts to Fishers Island in New York



Don Beck, who grew up across the water in Connecticut, came to New York's Fishers Island GC nine years ago. He's in his third year as superintendent.

and Washington state's Puget Sound, the superintendents who tend island layouts say they love their jobs.

Don Beck, superintendent at Fishers Island GC, grew up across the water in Connecticut and came to work at Fishers nine seasons ago as an operator. He is now in his third season as superintendent.

Beck and his counterpart, Dave Denison, superintendent of the nine-hole Hay Harbor Club, may be the most isolated of all the islanders. During peak season, ferries make their way to and from the island nearly eight times a day. In the off-season, when the island's 5,000 summer-only inhabitants leave, only three ferries a day serve an island population that drops to 250.

There are no restaurants open from October through April. The lone general store is open about six hours a day and the only place to get a beer is at the American Legion hall.

While there is work going on year-round at Fishers, Denison is also a science teacher at the island's single school as well as a lobsterman.

"You should have seen it before the Internet and satellite TV," Beck says, shaking his head at the not-too-distant-past. "You could get three or four TV stations and the rest were all static."

Beck says he spends much of his free time reading or on his 17-foot Boston Whaler. "I like to fish and that's my only peace of mind," he adds.

Challenges abound

After learning the price Beck pays for his island existence — both in money and time — it's easy to understand why he needs peace of mind. Beck pays \$700 to get one load of topdressing to the docks of the picturesque seaside town of New London, Conn., from which the ferry departs. From there, add nearly \$800 for the sand's 45-minute ride to the island. Part of that expense involves paying the truck driver for an additional four hours while he waits at the dock for the next ferry back to the mainland after delivering his load.

Other superintendents echo Beck's dilemma. At Sankaty Head GC on Nantucket Island, superintendent Chris Ryder's

budget includes nearly \$17,000 a year for topdressing and bunker sand. He orders a year's supply at the beginning of the season for the more than two-hour trip from Hyannis on Cape Cod to Nantucket.

Some of the shipping costs to Nantucket can be divided if Ryder and other island superintendents work together. For instance, if Mark Lucas, superintendent at Nantucket GC, needs a half truck of sod, he'll check with Ryder to see if he wants the other half. Ryder, Lucas and Miacomet

Finding workers can be difficult for these superintendents, and keeping the workers is even harder.

GC superintendent Bill Affinito often attempt to work together in getting equipment demonstrations out to the island. Distributors are more likely to send equipment if three courses are testing the product. Distributors for some small-ticket items often don't make sales calls.

"They figure if they're not going to get any business they might as well skip it," Ryder said. "Some guys like to come to Nantucket. Some really hate it."

Consequently, the islanders will have to order at either the New England regional or national superintendent shows.

Affinito, whose nine-hole public access Miacomet is in the process of expanding to 18 holes, said Sankaty Head and Nantucket have a much easier time getting attention from distributors than he does.

"They have a lot more pull than I do. Those are two top-100 golf courses and have huge budgets," he adds.

Even when equipment gets to the island there can be problems. Ryder recently made one distributor add an extra year onto the warranty of a mower after it spent the entire ride to Nantucket on the deck

of the ship and as a result was covered in salt spray. Ryder said he told the distributor to make sure the mower was placed inside the ship.

At San Juan Golf and CC, a semi-private nine-hole course located on Washington state's San Juan Island, superintendent Brian Germain faces many of the same problems. Not only does he have a difficult time getting demos, he also runs into trouble when major repairs are needed to vital mowers.

Two years ago, his only fairway unit on the nine-hole course had to be shipped off-island for repairs. During the two weeks it was being fixed, Germain was forced to mow fairways with a seven-gang unit that up to that point had been used only on roughs. "You have to learn to improvise a lot," Germain says.

It's nearly a two-hour boat ride to the island town of Anacortes, which is located just off the coast of Washington and is connected to the mainland by a bridge. Although the islands of Lopez and Orcas are near San Juan and each have nine-hole mom-and-pop courses, Germain says there is little communication between the three courses' superintendents.

Hoping the rain holds up

Getting parts and supplies are just one problem for Germain. Irrigation is another. With the ocean surrounding the golf course, getting quality fresh water can be a nightmare.

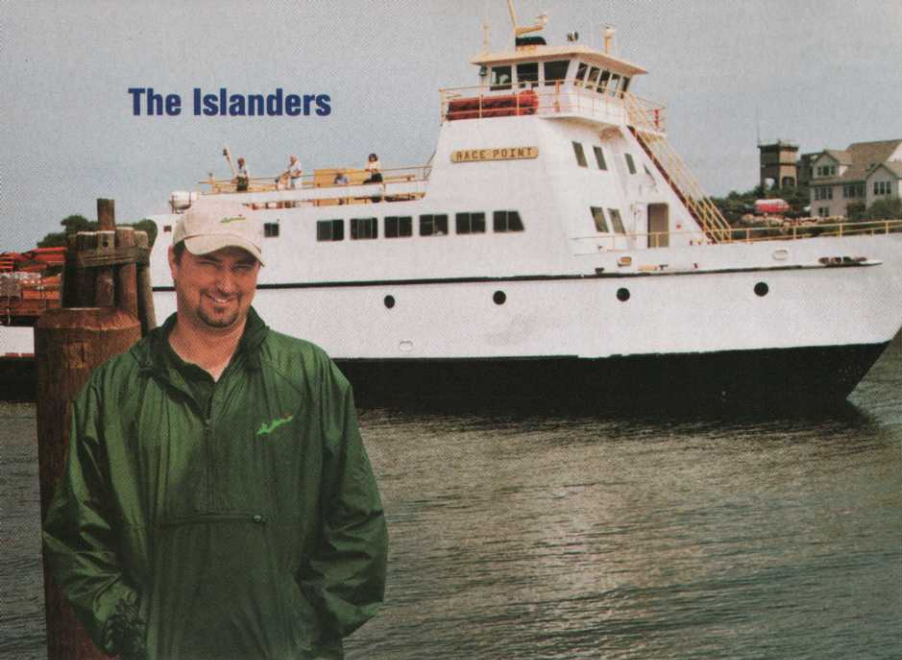
Germain must rely on holding ponds that fill during Washington's rainy months. In a dry year such as 2002, he has to manage his water efficiently to make sure it lasts. At one point in August, he was using 110,000 gallons a day.

"I do a lot of hand-watering," he says. "It's labor-intensive, but it's efficient." He also admits it's nerve-wracking. "I wake up at night thinking about it."

On Fishers Island, Beck's water problems don't just have to do with salt content, but with his power supply — or lack thereof. Because the electrical cable running to the island first takes care of Groton, Conn., any power drain — such as

Continued on page 106

The Islanders



There's no mall to go to on Fishers Island, so Beck spends a lot of his free time reading and fishing.

Continued from page 105

those during heat waves — sends Fishers into brownouts or even blackouts, as Groton sucks up the electricity. To avoid irrigation catastrophes, the course's irrigation pumps are powered by diesel engines.

Courses face labor problems

The worst of all problems, however, appears to be keeping labor, most of which is seasonal.

Sankaty, Nantucket and Fishers all provide housing for seasonal help, necessitated by the lack of available space as well as the astronomical rents. Because of the small year-round population, Fishers must import almost all its help. Only mechanic Jim Clemens, who travels to work every morning on the 4:30 a.m. ferry and returns home each afternoon, can be considered a commuter. The courses in Washington and Massachusetts have larger permanent populations to augment the staff, but the core is seasonal.

Ryder and Germain do employ a few retirees who live on the respective islands and work part-time, but not just for the money. There is another perk that many of the courses offer.

"There are a lot of guys looking for free golf. That makes a big difference," Germain says.

Getting seasonal help to the course is one thing, but having them stay is another. "Some just can't handle living on an island," Beck adds.

Since there are no stores to speak of on Fishers, all shopping must be done on the mainland. Because of the limited ferry schedule, shopping can only be accomplished on the worker's one day off a week. Beck says the key is to stock up on the essentials. He keeps meat in a large freezer in his cellar.

With no restaurants, every meal must be

home-cooked, a daunting task for some. Beck has had workers leave after just two weeks when faced with the reality of living on an island.

For some superintendents, part-time help is nonexistent. Trying to convince college kids to rake bunkers for \$10 an hour when they can wait tables and take home \$1,000 a week is futile.

Beck's first assistant Jim Easton is in his first year at Fishers after spending a season at Lahontan GC in Truckee, Calif., near Lake Tahoe, Nev. He is adjusting to the culture shock of isolated living. Beck warned him of what he would face.

"It's one of the things you understand before you get here," Beck says. "There's no more binge shopping when you just go to the mall."

Lucas and his crew have the same problems on the larger island of Nantucket, although groceries can be purchased without a boat ride. Even if some essential items are available, the expensive nature of items on Nantucket makes it necessary to purchase them on the mainland.

"It's tough to buy clothing," he says. "There are no chain stores. A pair of work boots, for instance, can cost nearly double what they cost on the Cape. I miss Home Depot."

There are other parts of mainland life the islanders find they miss, like fast food. "That's the first thing we do when we get off the ferry is go to McDonald's or Wendy's, and sometimes it's the last stop we make on the way back," Lucas said.

Why they stay

There appears to be no rhyme or reason to those superintendents who head for the islands. Ryder is a native of Nantucket, but Germain hails from Idaho and Lucas from Indiana. Beck grew up on the Connecticut coastline and Affinito was raised in Massachusetts.

What makes life more bearable for many is the accompaniment of a spouse. Ryder, Germain and Affinito are married. Beck lives with his girlfriend. Easton's girlfriend recently moved to Fishers. According to Affinito, he and his wife had trepidations about moving to Nantucket.

"There are a lot of unknowns," he says. "You're 30 miles out to sea."

With all the hassles, however, those who work the island courses stay where they are by choice. "It's a different way of life," Beck says.

And it is their way of life. ■

Pioppi is a free-lance writer from Middletown, Conn.

Leaders

PEOPLE ON THE MOVE

NOTABLE ACHIEVERS

The following superintendents were recently certified: **Michael Magnani** at Admiral Baker GC in San Diego; **Brett Hetland** at Brooks GC in Okoboji, Iowa; **Michael Luccini** at Brookmeadow CC in Canton, Mass.; **Oscar Peterson** at Freeport (Ill.) CC; **Mark Mixdorf** at Highland Meadows GC in Sylvania, Ohio; **Bart Cash** at Jackson (Minn.) CC; **John Hanson** at Miles Grant GC in Stuart, Fla.; **Darin Spierings** at Northstone Club in Huntersville, N.C.; **Allen Parkes** at Oak Hills CC in Palos Heights, Ill.; **Eric Bresky** at Olde Kinderhook GC in Valatie, N.Y.; **Brian Clodfelter** at Pinehurst (N.C.); **John Jordan** at Tantalum CC in Fort Washington, Md.; and **Stephen Rabideau** at Wheatley Hills GC in East Williston, N.Y.

The Midwest Association of Golf Course Superintendents announced its new board of directors: **Kevin DeRoo**, superintendent at Bartlett (Ill.) Hills GC, president; **Fred Behnke**, superintendent at Mt. Prospect (Ill.) GC, vice president; **Phil Zeinert**, certified superintendent at Elgin (Ill.) CC, secretary/treasurer; **Tim Anderson**, certified superintendent at Prestwick CC in Frankfort, Ill.; **Dave Braasch**, superintendent at Glen Erin GC in Janesville, Wis.; **Ed Braunsky**, certified superintendent at Geneva (Ill.) GC; **Luke Cella**, certified superintendent at Tamarack GC in Naperville, Ill.; **Gary Hearn**, superintendent at Salt Creek GC in Wood Dale, Ill.; **Tony Kalina**, superintendent at Prairie Landing GC in West Chicago, Ill.; and **Scott Speiden**, Itasca (Ill.) CC; directors.

Jacobsen Turf, Commercial and Specialty Equipment appointed **Howard May** as senior vice president of operations.

Lane Tredway, a recent graduate from the University of Georgia in Plant Pathology, was the winner of Musser International Turfgrass Foundation Award of Excellence for 2002.

Julian Arredondo became the GCSAA's COO on March 1.

The National Golf Course Owners Association selected **The Straits Course at Whistling Straits** to receive the 2003 Jemsek Award. The Jemsek Award was named in honor of Joe Jemsek, long-time NGCOA member who was considered the leader in the growth of public, daily fee golf courses.

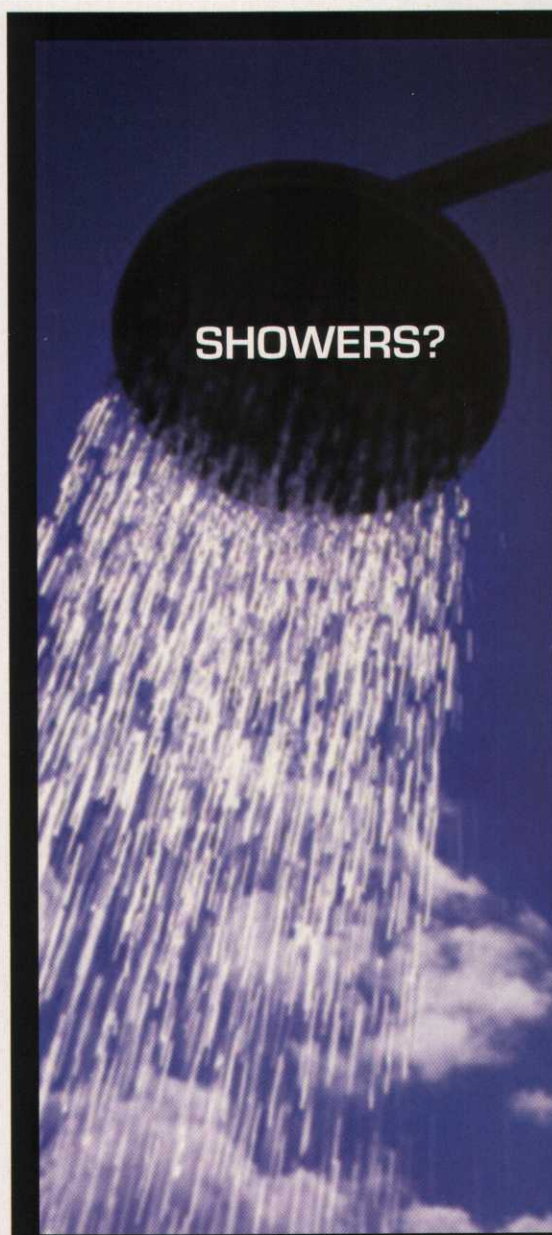
Bill Campbell, one of the country's leading amateur

golfers and the only person to ever serve as president of the USGA and captain of the Royal & Ancient GC at St. Andrews, was named the recipient of the American Society of Golf Course Architects' Donald Ross Award.

Houston Couch, who has taught plant pathology on the college level for nearly 50 years and published the first book on the subject in 1962, re-

ceived the USGA's annual Green Section Award. Couch is a professor at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Va.

Let us know about your people on the move. Send information/ color photos to *Golfdom's Frank Andorka* at 7500 Old Oak Blvd., Cleveland, 44130. Fax information to 440-891-2675 or e-mail to fandorka@advanstar.com.



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CIRCLE NO. 140

The Company Line

PRODUCTS & SERVICES

► New formula

ROOTS introduces a new and improved formula of its **ROOTS 1-2-3 liquid Premix**, which features more active ingredients. The new product contains nitrogen, 23 percent more chelated iron and 100 percent more chelated manganese. The biostimulants (vitamins and amino acids) in the product have also been increased.

For more information, contact 203-786-5295, www.rootsinc.com or CIRCLE NO. 200



Portable syringing unit

Dakota Peat & Equipment introduces the **Greenwave**, a high-precision, portable syringing unit specifically designed for superintendents. The **Greenwave** features a metered **Dosomatic Advantage** injector with flow rates from .25 gallons per minute to 30 gpm, making it ideal for syringing or other spot chemical treatments, according to the company. The 100-foot, 1-inch hose can be stored easily and connects quickly to any irrigation system head.

This self-contained unit also features an 8-gallon reservoir for liquid chemicals. It is mounted on a base that expands from 42 inches to 66.5 inches to ensure a snug fit on the back of most utility vehicles.

For more information, contact 800-477-8415, www.dakotapeat.com or CIRCLE NO. 201

Replacement blades

Wood Bay Enterprises offers a revised thatching reel featuring its **dynaBLADE**. **Wood Bay** manufactures the **dynaBLADE**, which is used for verticutting greens and fairways. These tungsten carbide-tipped replacement blades fit the industries most prominent turf maintenance mowers, the company says.

For more information, contact 800-661-4942, www.greensiron.com or CIRCLE NO. 202

▼ Blowers, vacuums

Giant-Vac offers its **Whisper Jet** leaf blowers, which feature a smooth-operating overhead valve engine, one-piece welded construction for added strength, and



an eight-blade cast aluminum impeller for increased airflow and quieter performance. **Giant-Vac** also offers trail vacuums to clear grass clippings, leaves and twigs from trails, paths and other areas of the golf course quickly and efficiently.

For more information, contact www.giant-vac.com or CIRCLE NO. 203

Fungicide

TerraCyte Broad Spectrum Algaecide/Fungicide is an environmentally friendly granular that can be applied directly to turf, soils, potted plants, propagation flats and liners for the prevention and control of moss, algae, slime,

molds, liverwort and their spores. The peroxygen chemistry allows for the oxidation and long-lasting prevention of these pathogens. The elements of **TerraCyte** are biodegradable and release active oxygen and carbon dioxide into the environment.

TerraCyte may be applied using a spreader or any other applicator that will assure uniform coverage. **TerraCyte** is activated by moisture and should be watered in after application.

For more information, contact 888-273-3088 or CIRCLE NO. 204

Trimmer, blower

Echo offers its new **SRM-260** trimmer. Its lightweight design and powerful **Power Boost Tornado** engine enhance productivity for any project, the company says. The **Power Boost Tornado** technology provides power, speed, torque and fuel-efficiency. **Echo's Tornado** engine meets all current EPA and CARB emissions regulations, and features variable slope timing — ensuring an easy start and smooth engine acceleration.

Echo also offers its **PB-750 Power Blower**, its newest addition to its line of heavy-duty power blowers.

For more information, contact www.echo-usa.com or CIRCLE NO. 205

Preloaded software

NSN, the **Toro Co.'s** technical support network for irrigation central control system customers, is now shipping **Toro** central controller computers preloaded with **Microsoft Windows XP** and **Phoenix FirstWare ME** solution, which includes **FirstWare Recover**, a disaster recovery software.

For **Toro** customers, this means backup images of their original operating system and application files are stored in a highly compressed format in a special area of the hard drive, protected from virus attacks, software corruption and end-user errors. For the first time, users can restore the PC operating system without the original install CDs or recovery CDs.

For more information, contact 888-676-8676 or CIRCLE NO. 206



▲ Walking greens mowers

Jacobsen Turf, Commercial and Specialty Equipment offers the new **Jacobsen E-Walk** all-electric walking greens mower. The mower has no oil, no hydraulic fluids and no emissions. It's also virtually noiseless, the company says, so greens can be cut in early mornings without disturbing golf course neighbors.

Independent, weather-sealed, 48-V brushless DC electric motors drive the unit. One controls ground speed while the other gives the operator the ability to adjust clip frequency independent of the mower's ground speed. **Jacobsen** says it costs just pennies a day to operate and has more than 80 percent of its parts in common with **Jacobsen's Greens King** mower.

Jacobsen also introduces the **Tournament Cut-22**, first in a family of floating-head walking greens mowers. The light-footed mowers feature greens-hugging, floating head reels. Suspended from the chassis, the floating reel of the **Tournament Cut** mower

moves horizontally, vertically and from side-to-side to eliminate scalping severely undulating greens.

The Tournament Cut-22 features a beltless direct drive system, not hydraulics, for both the reel and traction drum that protects both the turf and environment.

For more information, contact 704-504-6600, www.jacobsen.com or CIRCLE NO. 207

Utility vehicle

Redexim Charterhouse offers a new utility vehicle, the Carraro TigreCar GST77, designed specifically for use on golf courses. The TigreCar is a multi-purpose vehicle that features a rear flatbed with a three-sided hydraulic dumping capability and protective grid between the flatbed and the operator's seat.

The vehicle is manufactured by Antonio Carraro SpA.

For more information, contact 570-602-3058, www.redexim.com or CIRCLE NO. 208

Ireland vacation

Superintendents who purchase \$5,000 or more of **Milliken/Emerald Isle** products by July 3 are eligible for an entry into a drawing for an all-expenses paid trip to Ireland for a week of golf and fun. In addition, the sales representative of the authorized Milliken distributor who works with the winning superintendent will accompany the winner. The trip includes round-trip airfare, six nights accommodation, green fees for five rounds of golf and more.

For more information, contact your Milliken/Emerald Isle Distributor or call Milliken Turf Products at 800-845-8502.



Repair tool

GreenFix Golf introduces a three-in-one repair tool designed to help turf maintenance professionals repair ball marks on greens. The GreenFix PRO is the professional version of the new GreenFix for golfers, a convenient ball mark repair tool that's incorporated into the putter grip.

GreenFix PRO includes a patented GreenFix ball mark repair tool at one end of an aluminum shaft, a roller for smoothing the repaired turf at the other end and a coring tool that is accessed with the twist of a thumbscrew. This long-handled repair tool makes it easy to repair ball marks without bending over, saving time and labor.

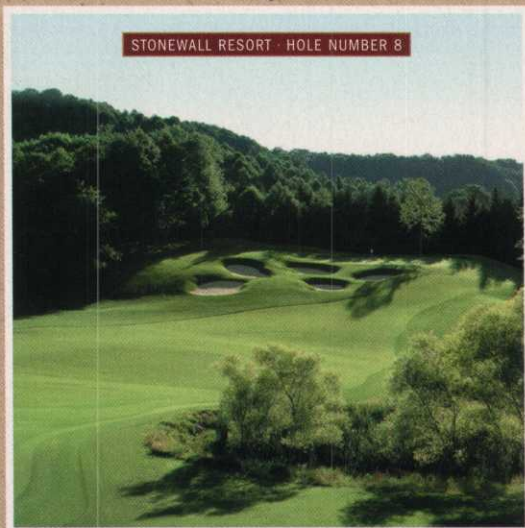
For more information, contact 866.443.4222, www.greenfix-golf.com or CIRCLE NO. 209

Fungicide

Vital 4L Fungicide, marketed by **Griffin LLC**, has received EPA approval for use in turf and ornamentals. Vital 4L is a systemic liquid fungicide that controls pythium, phytophthora and downy mildew pathogens in turf and ornamentals. The product has been used effectively in the agricultural market for years, and will be a cost-effective in the turf and ornamental markets, according to Griffin.

Griffin says Vital has been tested in university trials with excellent results. Vital 4L is a liquid, pH neutral formulation, meaning it has excellent mixing flexibility, according to the company. There are no heavy metals in the formulation, which means the product is safer to both plants and applicator.

For more information, contact 800-737-3995, www.griffinllc.com or CIRCLE NO. 210



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Golfdom Sales Staff



Pat Jones

Publisher/Editorial Director
7500 Old Oak Blvd.
Cleveland, OH 44130

Phone: 440-891-3126
Fax: 440-891-2675
Email: pjones@advanstar.com



Pat Roberts

Western Manager
7500 Old Oak Blvd.
Cleveland, OH 44130

Phone: 440-891-2609
Fax: 440-891-2675
Email: proberts@advanstar.com



Joe Sosnowski

Eastern Manager
150 Stratford Ave.
Wayne, PA 19087

Phone: 610-687-2356
Fax: 610-687-1419
Email: jsosnowski@advanstar.com



Kevin Stoltman

Midwest Manager
7500 Old Oak Blvd.
Cleveland, OH 44130

Phone: 440-891-2772
Fax: 440-891-2675
Email: kstoltman@advanstar.com



Michael Harris

Account Executive
7500 Old Oak Blvd.
Cleveland, OH 44130

Phone: 440-891-3118
Fax: 440-826-2865
Email: mharris@advanstar.com



Laura Cieker

Classified, Account Executive
7500 Old Oak Blvd.
Cleveland, OH 44130

Phone: 800-225-4569 x2670
Fax: 440-826-2865
Email: lcieker@advanstar.com

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