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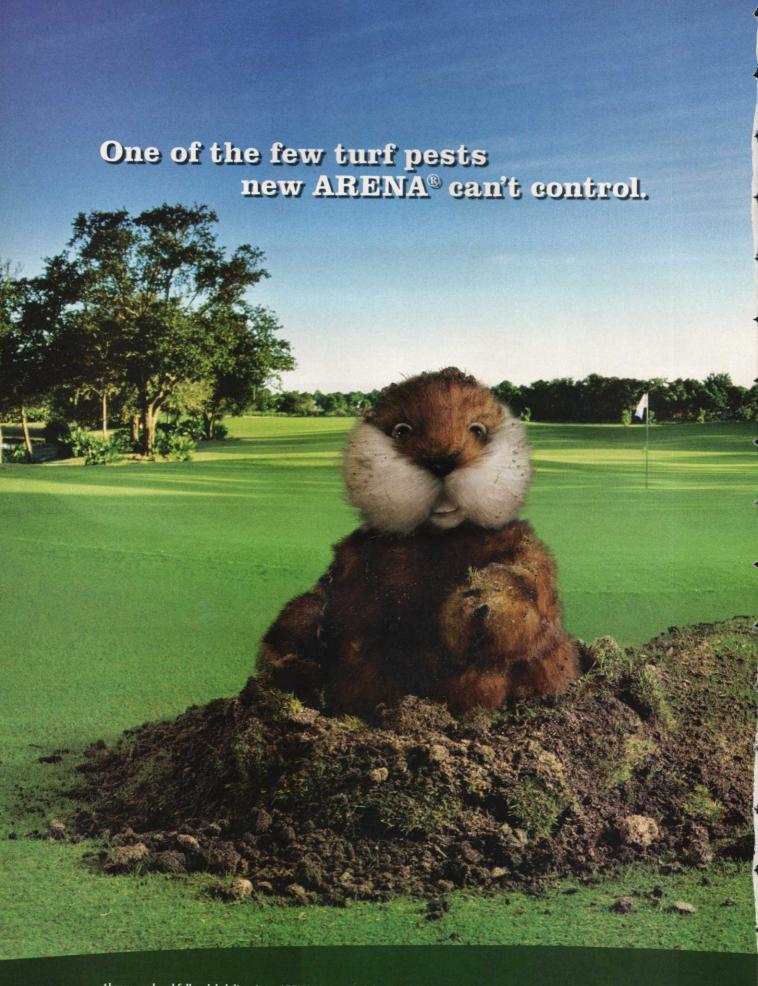
The wireless transmitters are installed using only a cup cutter and, with the help of signal boosters positioned throughout the course, send a continuous stream of vital information directly to your PC. The RZ-Wireless software features an easy-to-use dashboard-style interface that lets you instantly see if your soil conditions are within ideal ranges.

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### **Shades Of Green**

OPINION

od bless the first amendment, free speech, a free press and the public's right to know. Those rights, freedoms and liberties are often cited by the media to

inquire about, report on and to speak out on issues. But sometimes there's one thing missing — relevant fact. I know facts can be manipulated too, but they're better than innuendo and insinuations.

In February of this year, a newspaper in southwest Florida ran this story: "Weed killers hurting estuary, scientist says." In the story there was no factual evidence of any actual damage to the estuary. There were only inferences and innuendos that "the uses of certain herbicides pose a threat to seagrasses and other important aquatic life." The article was written based on a report given at a Charlotte Harbor Watershed Summit by a scientist commissioned by the Conservancy of Southwest Florida to do a study on pesticide loading.

Agriculture took the brunt of the blame, but lawn care, mosquito control and golf courses also got to share the blame for the presence or detection of five pesticides found in the estuary; where and exactly how much wasn't reported. The five were amethryn, atrazine, bromacil, norflurazon and simazine. No agriculture or green industry sources were quoted to provide any semblance of balanced reporting. It was what it was: ignorant reporting or a calculated hack job on pesticides.

Cutting to the chase, the only chemical labeled for golf course use of the five found in the study was simazine. In a Google search on simazine, I found this information easily: "Simazine rapidly breaks down chemically in water and does not bio-accumulate in fish."

By now I'm really ticked at all the generalizing and cheap shots being tossed around. Then came the clincher, and I quote, "But the toxicity of atrazine, the active ingredient in the popular weed killer Roundup, has never been calculated." Duh! Who was wrong, the speaker or the reporter?

I alerted allied Ag and Green Industries about the article. I wanted to see how they might want to respond. Given the factual goof above, most favored ignoring the story rather

## Remiss Media Muddy the Waters

BY JOEL JACKSON



TO ESTABLISH
CONTACTS AND
WORKING
RELATIONSHIPS
WITH THEIR LOCAL
MEDIA OUTLETS

than keeping it alive. In my media communications training, communications experts recommend contacting the media about incorrect information that has been written or broadcast. They keep files for future stories. So I e-mailed the reporter about the error and offered to be a source if related stories came up and he needed to check some facts.

He thanked me for the correction and apologized for the mistake, but his reason didn't relieve my disgust for the shoddy piece. His almost cavalier excuse was "it must have been the result of poor note taking!" I just hope the folks over at Monsanto are happy with his apology now that their product has been falsely linked to the contamination of Charlotte Harbor by faulty note taking. After recent media credibility fiascos from Jayson Blair's creative writing career at the *New York Times* and Dan Rather and CBS News' failure to verify facts, you'd think they would be trying harder to get it right.

Because of articles like this, I urge chapters to establish contact and working relationships with their local media outlets. Have reporters speak at meetings and/or give them tours of a golf course. It provides credibility for us and gives them at least a rudimentary education in pesticide, fertilizer and water use.

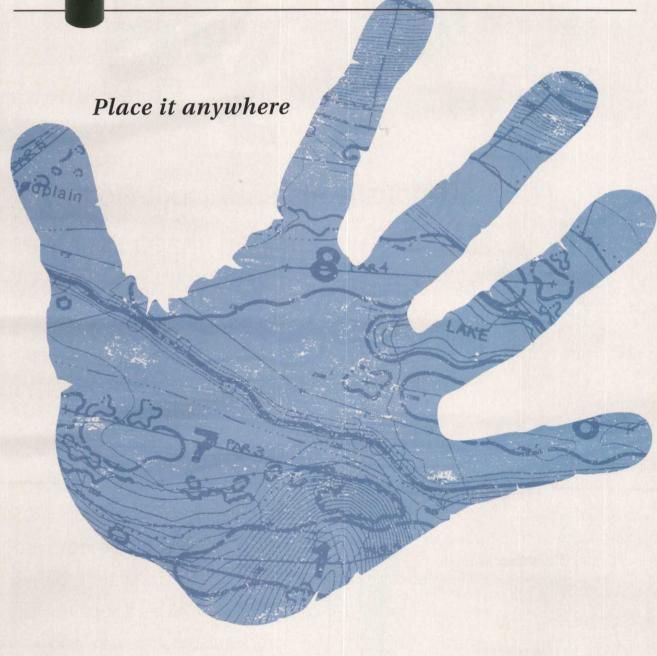
It is our responsibility to use best management practices to minimize and prevent pollution, and it should be the media's responsibility to provide fair and balanced reporting. If they want loyal readership and viewership, then they must provide unbiased clarity instead of continuous cheap controversy muddying up the issues. One more thing, media folks — ignorance of the facts is no excuse.

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



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# Mamas' Boys

Six industry men pay tribute to the mothers who helped shape their lives

There's an old Jewish proverb that says, "God could not be everywhere, so he therefore made mothers."

In honor of Mother's Day on May 8, *Golfdom* salutes the moms of the many individuals — from superintendents to owners — who comprise the golf industry. In this special section from pages 26 through 38, Editor in Chief Larry Aylward and Managing Editor Thomas Skernivitz ask seven industry men to tell them how their mothers influenced them — in and outside of their careers. The men featured in this section — Matt Shaffer, Tim O'Neill, Jim Nicol, Michael and Vinny lacono, Tom Marzolf and Bill Leeke — all are self-proclaimed mamas' boys who have earnest relationships with their mothers. *Golfdom* thanks them for sharing their stories.

# **Matt Shaffer:**

## Mom provided me a life form

#### BY LARRY AYLWARD, EDITOR IN CHIEF

here are so many critical things his mother taught him about how to live a meaningful life, says Matt Shaffer, that it's difficult to remember them all. That said, the soft-spoken and gentlemanly Shaffer, the superintendent of Merion Golf Club, has much in common with his 87-year-old mother Miriam.

"[She provided me] a life form," Shaffer says of their relationship.

Shaffer grew up in the kind of small town that John Mellencamp sings about in his heartfelt tune of the same name. If Shaffer could add a verse to the song, it would be in tribute to his mother, who still lives in the town of Martinsburg, Pa., population 2,500.

Shaffer, 52, is the youngest of four children. He has two sisters and a brother. He says his mother and father, Luther, provided him and his siblings with a "real strong home life." Shaffer credits his parents with providing "the foundation" of his life.

Miriam was a stay-athome mom. Matt says one of his earliest memories of his mother is how loving and devoted she was to tending to him when he was ill.

"I was sick a lot when I was kid with severe asthma and allergies," he says. "She took really good care of me."

Matt also remembers that Miriam was strict and forthright, which garnered her kids' respect.

"My mom is not a very big person, but we towed the line when she talked," Shaffer says.

There was nothing fancy about his upbringing, says Shaffer, who was raised as a Mennonite. His mother placed a major focus, however, on living by the golden rule. "Treat people like you want to be treated," Shaffer says.

Shaffer probably never would have wanted to be a golf course superintendent and work 12 hours a day during the playing season and not take many days off - if he didn't have a strong work ethic. He doesn't remember his mother drilling it into his mind that he had to work hard to succeed. She took a more subtle approach while planting the seed that hard work and commitment to finish the things you started will get you to a lot of places in life.

"She would say, 'Before you go hunting, you have to finish your chores,' "Shaffer says. "It was an unwritten thing. And you didn't challenge her because you didn't mind doing your chores."

Continued on page 38



PHOTO BY: GERALD T. LEID

"... I really

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about and

TIM O'NEILL

# Tim O'Neill:

## She was there as I climbed GCSAA ladder

BY THOMAS SKERNIVITZ, MANAGING EDITOR

alk about sudden impact: Even before Tim O'Neill could be formally announced as the new president of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America, he was helping to rewrite the group's record books.

With O'Neill's parents, seven brothers and sisters, a few aunts and uncles and most of his colleagues from the Country Club of Darien (Conn.) in attendance, the Golf Industry Show attracted nearly 23,000 people.

"We were definitely responsible for improving the numbers this year at the show," O'Neill says jokingly.

None of the contingent was as proud as O'Neill's mother Joan.

"She's come to the last couple of shows as I've moved closer to becoming president," her son says. "I don't know how many mothers were at the Golf Industry Show, but mine was there."

Thirty years ago, that might have embarrassed O'Neill. But at age 47, with a wife (Jennifer) and two children (Justin, 16, and Kristen, 13), he says it's "always a thrill" to share a moment with mom.

"I'm at the age now where I'm a parent with teenagers, so I understand when my kids want me to walk about four Joan O'Neill attended the Golf Industry Show to watch her son Tim be named GCSAA president.

feet behind them as we're walking through the mall," O'Neill says. "But I'm also at the stage — and I've been at this stage for a long time in life, actually - that I really appreciate what a mother's all about and what a mother means to you. I cherish the moment and I feel real fortunate that I was able to show my mother firsthand a little bit about what I've been into professionally for a bunch of years."

Not that Joan is new to golf. Husband Vincent is a big fan of the sport — "a lot of my mom's heroes are my dad's heroes," Tim says and that carried over to Tim and his three brothers.

"She put up with a lot of Saturday and Sunday afternoons watching golf," O'Neill says. "She had her hands full with all of us. ... She would argue (now) that she was a golfer before she started having kids, but she had eight kids in 10 years, so there wasn't a lot of golfing going on during that period right there."

O'Neill grew up in Rhode Island, where his parents and several of his siblings still reside. At age 19 he started as the assistant superintendent at the Greenwich (Conn.) Country Club. Only three years later he was named the third superintendent in the history of Darien, which had been founded in 1957.

"I knew what I wanted to do at an early age," O'Neill says, "and she gave me all the freedom in the world to pursue being a golf course superintendent.

"My mom means an awful lot to me. And for that I'm extremely grateful and certainly thrilled that, in becoming president, I was able to share that with my mother." ■



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# Jim Nicol:

## I always had a special bond with my mom

BY LARRY AYLWARD

arguerite Nicol was a meticulous mother who ran a tight ship when it came to managing her family's household in St. Cloud, Minn. Marguerite had four children, including Jim Nicol, her thirdborn child, who grew up to be the certified superintendent of Hazeltine National Golf Club in Chaska, Minn.

"I never remember our house being messy," Jim says. "My mother was a true homemaker. The windows were always clean and she made sure we were always dressed properly. We wore impeccably pressed shirts to school every day."

Not all the kids inherited their mother's spick-and-span gene, but Jim did. And that's a blessing for Jim, who has used that ability to tidy up the greens, tees and fairways that comprise his prized course, which hosted the PGA Championship in 2002 and will host it again in 2009.

"I'm a neat person," says the 53-year-old Nicol, in his ninth year at Hazeltine. "I always have shined shoes and clean clothes. I got that from her."

Marguerite, who grew up on a North Dakota farm, turns 85 this month and still lives in St. Cloud with her husband, Bob, who turned 90 in April. Marguerite is a young 85, however, and even plays a little golf. (Bob is also very active.)

"I hope *that's* in the genes," Jim says of his parents' spryness.

Jim says he always felt a special bond with his mother when growing up and still does. He could tell her about most anything on his mind and trust her to understand his problems. "I was close to my dad, too," Jim says, "but not like I was close to my mother."

Jim says his mom has a big heart and showed him how important it is to help others in need. When he was a child, Jim recalls a neighbor giving birth to triplets. The other moms in the neighborhood, including Marguerite, chipped in to buy the woman, Mrs. Jennings, a new clothes dryer.

"And they would go over her house every morning and every afternoon to fold diapers and drink coffee," Jim says.

Marguerite also taught Jim to be courteous and tolerant of others. For instance, Jim says he never called his parents' friends by their first names, although his friends' kids refer to him by his first name. "I don't mind it," Jim adds. "It's just a different generation."

Anybody who knows Jim knows he often takes a nononsense approach to certain matters and is not afraid to



express his opinion, even if it's unpopular. Jim says he acquired that distinction from his mother. "She's quiet, but she's very strong," he says.

Thanks in part to his mother, Jim says he lived a charmed childhood. It was a bit regimented and predictable but joyful nevertheless.

"We'd get up every morning and have breakfast," Jim says. "And mom would pack lunches. Then we'd go off to school."

The kids played after school, had dinner, did their homework (often with their mother's help) and went to bed. "We never stayed up late," Jim says.

Marguerite often prepared full sit-down dinners complete with dessert. Nicol says his mother is a terrific cook and baker. In fact, some of Nicol's fondest childhood memories are raiding the freezer for his mom's special-recipe chocolate-chip cookies. Did any of his mother's cooking prowess rub off on him? "No, it just made me heavy," Jim says.

Jim is proud to call his mom a "true homemaker." That said, Jim says that full-time motherhood is a lost art these days because so many mothers have been forced into the workforce to help pay their families' bills.

"I don't begrudge women for working today, but it has made a difference in our society," he says.

Jim is thankful for himself and his siblings that Marguerite was at the center of their lives while they were growing up. She still is, says Jim, who sees his parents at least once every two weeks.

"She means the world to me," he says. ■