

"BULL" MARKETING



The Story Behind The Creation of FarmLinks at Pursell Farms

FarmLinks at Pursell Farms is one of those places that take your breath away with unique views and vantage points and where you feel welcomed and content, like you've just visited an old friend. It's also a place that consistently impresses, from pristine greens and immaculate fairways to luxurious comfort and hospitality like nowhere else. But what sets this place apart? And how did the world's only research and demonstration golf course end up in Sylacauga, Alabama, or where some may consider "the middle of nowhere?"

The story of FarmLinks at Pursell Farms is extraordinary and compelling. It's an account that reaches back in history more than a century and covers the many triumphs and successes of a family business blessed with dreamers and visionaries. And it's a narrative that continues today, as this farm has evolved from growing cotton and raising longhorn steer to offering educational programs for the nation's turf grass industry and to recreating

Orchards and cotton were planted on the property from the early 1800s until about 1950, when the land was used primarily for pasturing cattle.

itself as world-class destination resort. The FarmLinks' story begins, quite simply, with manure. This pristine, award-winning, 3,500-acre facility built its foundation on the supply, growth and technology of fertilizer products. So much of the family history and the company origins are intertwined and it is a rich and colorful history. However, we will start with the "ah-ha!" moment, the singular event in the business that carved out a new and extraordinary path and ultimately brought about this one-of-a-kind destination.

Building The Business Backwards

The Pursell family business began with DeWitt Parker in 1904, as a small fertilizer company supplying much-needed products to local farmers. The company focused most of its efforts on agriculture back in those days, with DeWitt and his son, Howard, leading the way. The business grew and changed over the years, but, for the most part, fertilizer was always



1904

Sylacauga Fertilizer Company DeWitt Parker founded Sylacauga Fertilizer Company as a side job while working for L&N Railroad.



1930

Howard Parker Era Begins At the death of DeWitt Parker, his son, Howard, moved back home from Atlanta, Ga., to take over the family fertilizer and cotton ginning businesses.



1959

Parker Fertilizer Company Howard Parker changes the name of the company from Sylacauga Fertilizer Company to Parker Fertilizer Company.



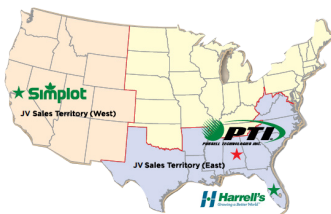
1980's

In the early 1980s, Jimmy's son, David, freshly out of Auburn University's commercial art program, was trying to create a clever t-shirt design and slogan for Sta-Green. He came up with the "Connoisseurs of Manures" slogan and design, which was successfully used for 25 years.



1986

Pursell Industries is formed as a subsidiary of Parker Fertilizer Company so that SulfurKote® Fertilizers could be sold to Parker Fertilizer Company's competitors.



1995 to 1998

Pursell Companies Forms Joint Ventures Up to this point, Pursell Industries had been working on a strategy fortaking SulfurKote and POLYON beyond their existing market, located primarily in the southeast, to a national level, with very little capital toinvest. Early projections indicated they would need to hire a team of 250 salesman, nation-wide, to the tune of \$250 million. Following the midwestern fertilizer company's purchase, a new relationship-marketing strategy that brought guests to Pursell Farms was born.

an integral piece of the puzzle. This was true even in 1956, when the company made its first move into the lawn and garden market with Sta-Green Plant Food, and the focus changed from farming products to specialty products for golf courses, nurseries and consumers.

Another major turning point occurred in 1956 when Howard's son-in-law, Jimmy Pursell, who had joined the family business and picked up the reins, turned his eye to a fertilizer technology that was much more advanced than manure – slow-

release fertilizers. At first, these products, while lasting longer, were inefficient in their nutrient delivery. Eventually, newer technologies were developed that featured the slow-release process using

a special coating that enabled the product inside to be released over a longer period of time, which, in turn, reduced the number of overall fertilizer applications and helped the uptake of nutrients essential for turf growth, color and disease resistance. Pursuing this newer and better option, Jimmy and his team pushed forward with bold plans to build a sulfur-coated urea (SCU) manufacturing plant to produce SulfurKote®, which would become one of their leading fertilizer products. With that move in 1986, the family company was thrust into the national and international spotlights, having one of only four SCU plants in the world!

Experiencing The FarmLinks "Ah-Ha!" Moment

Shortly after that milestone, the Pursells received a phone call from a mid-western fertilizer company that was one of largest users of sulfur-coated urea in the country. The news of the Pursell's SCU plant had piqued their interest so much that they wanted to see it for themselves. The Pursells really didn't know what to expect from this group but the team put their heads together to create a fun and entertaining 24-hour agenda. The VIPs toured the new plant, stayed overnight at Jimmy and Chris Pursell's personal guest

house, dined on home-cooked meals and experienced Southern hospitality at its finest. The big time company rang Pursell Farms a week later and said that they had decided to switch ALL of their

plants over from their current source to the Pursells. It was an order that would make up 25% of the plant's capacity and it was an order that was filled with just one visit from one customer. The Pursell family's personal touch and relationship building was and remains an important component to their success.

As a result of this event, David Pursell, Jimmy's son, who had by this time worked his way through the family business, began to think on whether they should do more business this way and if so, how they would do it. "There's a unique strategy here that we can employ in our business," he thought. "Instead of putting salesmen on the road with fancy brochures and product samples and going from place to place, all over the nation,

In the early 1970s, Jimmy Pursell promoted his Sta-Green line of fertilizers on Atlanta-area billboards. They used the catchy slogan "Up Your Grass" with STA-GREEN!"

we can get potential customers to come here and visit us. We need to be proactive about this, rather than just reactive. But how do we do that on a grander scale?"

It was at this moment the combination of David's personal connection to the family farm and his passion for golf, along with his creative business drive, which brought forth a completely new and innovative, interpersonal marketing strategy.

Forget the old, classic methods for marketing; they were going to pursue a new untried method of conducting business. Instead of sending people out, David knew that the better approach was to bring people in, to invite visitors to his family farm, with no distractions and no strings attached. And his mission from that point on (15 years and counting) was to refine this strategy and to bring it to life!

Creating New Fertilizer Technologies

While David continued to set his plans in motion, Pursell Industries kept moving forward in technological advancements and was now quite evolved from their old "Connoisseurs of Manures" days. While working to improve the manufacturing and marketing of SulfurKote, they were also conducting research on new

Mineral-rich sulphur springs located on Pursell Farms were once the key element to historic Talladega Springs, a bustling resort town that offered the springs for medicinal therapy, along with hotels, dining and dance halls, swimming pools and a bowling alley.

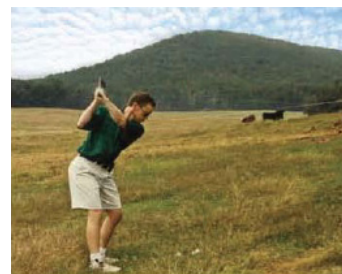
fertilizer products. One product that caught their attention was a technology called Reactive Layers Coated Urea (RLCU), unique because its special polymer coating offered a more predictable and

longer-lasting release of the fertilizer contained inside. As the team refined and enhanced the RLCU process, POLYON® was born.

POLYON, the "fertilizer of the future," entered the market in 1992 as one of the most amazing break-

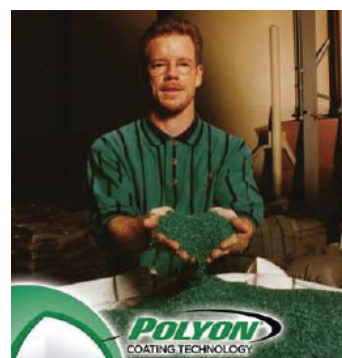
throughs in the turf grass industry – a durable, long-lasting fertilizer that produced reliable, accurate control. The unique polymer technology made POLYON an extended-release fertilizer, which meant that with different coating thicknesses, the product could match just about any nutritional requirement for almost any growing thing with just one technology! This would ultimately revolutionize how professionals across the globe maintained their golf courses. With POLYON, golf course superintendents could easily determine how often and when they would fertilize their turf, depending on their own specific circumstances, weather conditions and timelines.

The problem, however, was that this new, unheard-of technology cost more per pound than the other tried-and-true options. The value was there, since custom-



1995 First Swing

David Pursell had lived on the farm and worked in the family business for 15 years. His love for golf, coupled with his vision for what would eventually become FarmLinks, inspired him to hit shots toward imaginary targets. The "fairway" here became the 18th hole eight years later.



1992

Parker Fertilizer Consolidates

Parker Fertilizer Company is officially consolidated/absorbed by Pursell Industries. Pursell Industries launches their flagship product, POLYON® technology, a patented, programmable, time-release fertilizer that changed the agronomy industry, especially in the golf course maintenance and ornamental nursery markets.



POLYON® and SulfurKote®



1998

David Pursell Meets Golf Course Architect Dr. Mike Hurdzan

In 1998, Dr. Mike Hurdzan was the keynote speaker for GCSAA's, Environmental Steward Award, of which Pursell Technologies, Inc. was a sponsor. It was at that award ceremony that David Pursell met Dr. Hurdzan and arranged for him to come to Alabama to check out the farm to potentially design a research and demonstration golf course.



1999

Pursell Technologies Moves to Pursell Farms

Pursell Technologies moves their corporate headquarters from downtown Sylacauga to a new facility located 10 miles west at Pursell Farms.



2001

Parker Lodge Opens

The beautiful 14,000-square-foot Parker Lodge opened in June 2001. Since then, over 10,000 golf superintendents and other guests from around the globe have stayed here.

ers could save money, overall, with fewer applications of POLYON than with any other fertilizer product, but this would take some explanation. The Pursells' and the company team thrived on the interesting challenge of convincing people to purchase and use the new fertilizer technology.

Forming joint Ventures

The new fertilizer technology required the development of a better strategy for the distribution and selling POLYON which would better enable Pursell Industries to build their market share in this technology.

Pursell Industries was a small, family owned and operated business in a small Alabama town. Traditionally, to get a small-town product sold on a large, global scale, it would involve hundreds of millions of dollars invested in a sales staff, a marketing strategy, formulation plants, distribution warehouses and transportation. The Pursells didn't have that kind of an operation. But they did have innovators who cared about their people and their products. And they had an amazing technology that other companies eagerly wanted. Those other companies, namely Harrell's in Lakeland, Florida, and J.R. Simplot in Lathrop, California, already had market share and strong sales teams in

place. They had all the resources and facilities necessary for producing, selling and distributing on a national scale. So, the Pursells made them an offer they couldn't refuse. Pursell Industries would provide the fertilizer technology and these two leading producers of custom-blended fertilizers would

formulate, market and deliver the products. The strategy was like a virtual merger, incorporating the joint efforts of all parties who contributed their share and then split the profits. Most importantly, the plan enabled the distribution of POLYON to grow from a modest, southern section of the United States to coast to coast and beyond!

The Pursell's unique joint ventures with Harrell's and Simplot proved profitable for everyone involved. However, it became more and more evident to David that in order to effectively educate the industry and to create awareness about the innovative, new fertilizer technology, they were going to need an inspired new marketing strategy. They needed to demonstrate the value of POLYON, and they needed to talk directly to their product's potential end users. David knew that the best place to do that was on a real, working golf course. So, David deliberated on how do you build a one-of-a-kind golf course (in the middle of nowhere) that people from all over the world would want to visit?

Beneath the city of Sylacauga lies the world's largest commercial deposit of the finest, cream-white marble; the vein extends 32 1/2 miles long and 400 feet deep. Marble quarried from Sylacauga was used in the Washington Monument, the Lincoln Memorial and the U.S. Supreme Court Building, along with other state and federal buildings.

The Strategy Solidifies

For about five years, while David pondered this very question, various representatives and end user groups traveled to the Pursell family farm, only six people at a time (much like the Midwestern company did years ago) for recreation and relaxation and for an introduction to POLYON. While working with customers so closely was a great way to build relationships, David recognized that the company couldn't keep bringing people to his mom and dad's personal home. Visitors needed a place to eat, a place to stay, a place to learn and a place to play. Of course, the beautiful Appalachian farm had everything one would need from the standpoint of golf course design. So David took that proverbial leap of faith and pushed forward with his dream - to build a research and demonstration golf course, where industry professionals would come to learn about new products and services, right here on his family's Sylacauga farm.

To say the least, it was an aggressive strategy. The landscape was a simple, serene backdrop of meadows, woods, hills and mountains, with the occasional farm animal roaming around. There were no paved roads. There was nothing! All of the vision was inside David's head and he was very passionate

From 1914 – 1923, the Old Eureka Railroad used to cross through Pursell Farms to transport marble extracted from the Eureka Quarry. When the quarry shut down in the 1920s, the railroad spur line was removed, leaving a foundational bed where a cart path lies today.

in communicating his vision that people who were hearing it could tell that he was not just dreaming about this project, he was actually seeing it. The family didn't quite understand or fully support build-

ing a golf course; they could definitely appreciate the reason behind it – a business strategy centered on relationships with customers. This was new – and big! And David, focusing on the power of good relationships, pushed his idea forward. He carefully began to meet with companies and key customers, forming alliances and ramping up for an exciting new adventure.

Finding Partners, an Architect, and a Builder

David has often stated that the world didn't need "just another golf course." So he made certain that this golf course was the only one of its kind. To be certain that it was just right, the well-known firm, Hurdzan-Fry Environmental Golf Design, was chosen to create it. They were challenged to carve an environmentally sound design out of the spectacular landscape, placing the course where it provided the very best golf experience possible. The layout itself measures some 7,444 yards, but Dr. Michael Hurdzan and Dana Fry had thousands of acres of diverse, available land to use when planning the championship de-



9/11

The Dream That Almost Wasn't

The horrific events that occurred on 9/11 caught everyone by surprise. The Pursell family held an emergency meeting the next day to discuss the possibility of postponing the FarmLinks project... or scrapping it altogether. Many other projects around the south were postponed or cancelled due to the uncertainty of the time. But construction had been going well for nearly three months. Many trees had been cleared, and a lot of dirt had been moved. In the end, the Pursell family, with the support of industry partners, decided not to allow a terrorist act to alter their plans for the bold strategy, and they chose to push forward with the dream.



2001

Ground Breaking

To make the dream come to life, inspired workers of all kinds were busy seven days a week, for almost two years. It was a blur, for everyone involved, and there were all sorts of pitfalls and problems, from bad weather, weeds and turf diseases to broken-down equipment and construction delays. But the team pushed on. (Left to Right: John Wright, TORO; Dana Lonn, TORO; Jimmy Pursell, David Pursell; Fred Palmer, Club Car; Bob Barrett, Honours Golf; and Bill Kirby, Landscapes Unlimited.)



2001

Founding Cornerstone Partners

The FarmLinks Golf Course project is unveiled, and construction begins on the world's first and only research and demonstration golf course, which showcases Pursell Technologies' patented fertilizer products and features product lines from their many partners.



2001

Construction Begins

FarmLinks construction began in the summer of 2001. Nearly 300,000 cubic yards of earth were moved. There was also a distinct effort to protect and preserve wetlands and natural wildlife habitats.



2002

Golf Course Architects

Dana Fry and David Whelchel of Hurdzan Fry were here to oversee construction and grow-in.

sign. That kind of flexibility - to actually place golf holes where they fit best - is virtually unheard of, and it certainly put David's idea in a class of its own! Landscapes Unlimited of Lincoln, NE was chosen to do the course construction.

Unleashing The Plan

Dedicated to research and demonstration, FarmLinks was well underway in the early 2000s as the ultimate backdrop for promoting fertilizer education and showcasing POLYON. But it didn't end

there. Relationship marketing at a "living laboratory" was a unique and powerful strategy. It provided uninterrupted, face-to-face time with potential customers, along with an unprecedented, year round opportunity to acquire and

utilize important feedback and suggestions from visitors. Before construction on the golf course began, big names like The Toro Company, Club Car and Syngenta (replaced by BASF in 2007) got on board; they wanted to incorporate their products and services, as well. The small, family owned fertilizer business was collaborating with the number-one, most recognizable names in the entire golf industry. It was truly a golf industry dream team, with all the cornerstone partners sharing new and innovative ideas and technologies. This cutting-edge desti-

nation was taking shape, like the "EPCOT" of golf!

The unique partnerships built around David's "relationship marketing strategy" soon brought about the evolution of The Experience at FarmLinks, a training program that combined real people with real experts for two days of hands-on training and seminars on various aspects of turf grass. Of course, there was also a lot of R&R thrown into this R&D program. The team continued the over-the top treatment of customers who came to Sylacauga to learn about the company's products and services. In addition to participat-

FarmLinks has won the National Customer Satisfaction and Loyalty Award presented by the National Golf Foundation for six consecutive years. It is also named the No. 1 Public Access Course in Alabama by GolfWeek magazine.

ing in the learning portion of The Experience, guests played golf, enjoyed home-cooked meals, took in a little fishing or watched a game and relaxed in the beautiful, 14,000-square-foot Parker Lodge. Superintendents from around the globe more than

10,000 to date - still enjoy this enhanced Experience nowadays, and guests may spot a group participating in on-the-course agronomy tours, examining some of the 30 plus types of grasses on property or trying out new maintenance equipment.

Selling The Family Fertilizer Business

Far from being "just another golf course," FarmLinks continues to grow and develop. But for the family business, fertilizer has almost become a thing of the past.

After rolling off FarmLinks, LLC, as a separate entity in 2005, Pursell Technologies Incorporated (and all its fertilizer technologies) sold to Canadian company, Agrium, in 2006. From that point on, David and the team have been able to focus more on the farm and on all its offerings. New construction from 2008 on has dotted the property with additional lodging accommodations, a new office building, a 5-stand sporting clay range and a dedicated garden for farm-to-table dining experiences. The team, which has won numerous state and national awards for public golf and customer loyalty, has also carved out specialty hunting and fishing adventures, cooking classes, spa treatments and a new golf academy. FarmLinks has also been able to focus on giving back to the community and to supporting charities and ministries.

Moving Forward

Undoubtedly, the innovative strategy behind this one-of-a-kind research and demonstration golf course has been a magnificent success. But the story of FarmLinks is

far from reaching its end. In fact, it's noticeably reshaping and redefining itself as a world-class resort destination - now Pursell Farms. While forming and building relationships is still an important part of what the Pursells do, this century-old family business is now the backdrop for everything from a weekend of golf to a corporate planning meeting, and from a candlelit wedding to an afternoon of sporting clays. The farm stands as a testament to visionaries and dreamers and as an inspiration to all who experience it - a unique and powerful idea that keeps progressing with each passing day.

More coming!



2003

The Experience at FarmLinks

Over the years, thousands of golf course superintendents have made their way to Pursell Farms to share and learn about innovative new maintenance ideas.



2006

SOLD!

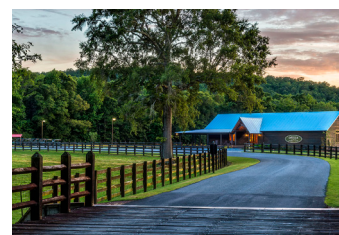
Pursell Technologies, Inc sells to Agrium.



2012

Cottages and Cabins

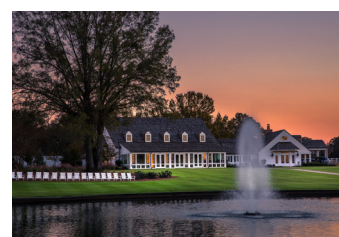
Guests of Pursell Farms stay in newly constructed cottages and cabins, located just off the FarmLinks golf course.



2015

ORVIS® Shooting Grounds

A partnership with the Orvis Corp. Guests can now participate in the very best in upland sporting adventures



2016

Hamilton Place Wedding & Event Venue

Premier wedding venue opens



2017

The Inn at Pursell Farms

Featuring 40 Guest rooms, two restaurants and The Old Hickory meeting room, the Inn is the centerpoint of the property.