

Comedy is what Nielsen's always wanted to do

BY PAUL NOLAN
The Acton Tanner

As reported in last week's *Tanner*, film star Leslie Nielsen and crew recently spent two weeks in Acton, shooting a sequel to the comedy golf video *Bad Golf Made Easy*.

The new video, tentatively titled *Bad Golf Made Easier*, was

shot at Blue Springs Golf Club.

A dramatic actor throughout the '50s and '60s, Nielsen began a successful new career as a deadpan comic actor with the release of the hit spoof *Airplane!*

Nielsen's hilarious portrayal of the hopelessly inept Lieutenant Frank Drebin, lead character in

the *Naked Gun* series, has made him an international star. Yet, the 68-year-old Regina native still impressed locals and Blue Springs staff with his graciousness.

We managed to catch up with Leslie Nielsen on the practice putting green just as shooting wrapped up.

The Acton Tanner: Tell us about this new video, and about its predecessor, *Bad Golf Made Easy*.

Leslie Nielsen: "Well, it's just been so much fun doing it! You know, I don't play golf to feel bad, I play bad golf to feel good."

"We're just having fun. *Bad Golf Made Easy* was so very successful, it just seems natural that we'd go on to make *Bad Golf Made Easier*."

"Why not be better at being bad? And we've had nothing but fun doing it, too."

Tanner: Since the first video was released, has your own golf game improved?

Nielsen: "Not a bit! No, no way. I'm a bad golfer! I accept that fact."

Tanner: We've seen the Masterpiece Theatre set that will be a backdrop in *Bad Golf Made Easier*. Tell us about that.

Nielsen: "It really is Masterpiece Theatre. We're dealing with the tradition of golf. We're dealing with just how far back in history golf goes. We're just really fitting ourselves into that niche, and talking about it — in a dumb, stupid way."

Tanner: Was the success of the first project a surprise?

Nielsen: "Well, we never thought it would *not* be successful; it was just a matter of how successful."

"You know, it's wonderful when you have fun, and people pick up on it. You go out to play a game, and people get on board and just go for the laughs. And that's fun!"

Tanner: Tell us about your stay in Acton, particularly at Blue Springs Golf Club.

Nielsen: "We looked at any number of golf courses, but the hospitality and the effort to assist and help us was totally apparent from the moment we came here."

"And it's been really a pleasure



BEHIND-THE-SCENES! Production crew works with Leslie Nielsen to prepare the actor for shooting of his upcoming *Hide House* commercial. The location was Blue Springs Golf Club's first tee. (Doug Harrison photo)

to be here on this particular golf course, because it's just so beautiful. Everyone has been so helpful!

"I feel such gratitude, I'm going to be doing a commercial for the olde Hide House."

"Also, we're going to establish a scholarship in my name at the University of Guelph, in post-graduate drama. This was a suggestion (olde Hide House president) Steve Dawkins made, and I said 'That would just be wonderful — I'd like to do something like that.' It will be putting something back into the pot, and I'm delighted."

Tanner: We know your brother Eric as a former member of the Brian Mulroney federal cabinet. And he had a very serious image. But ironically you have said that his sense of humour actually rivals your own.

Nielsen: "Oh, it does! He's a very funny man. But he learned very early in politics that the best thing you could do was keep your mouth shut. And 'Velcro Lips' did."

"But he opens them up now a great deal. Oh, he's got a marvelous sense of humour."

Tanner: Do you keep in touch?

Nielsen: "Sure. He's in Ottawa right now, as a matter of fact. We talked a few days ago."

Tanner: Where do you travel to now that you're leaving Acton?

Nielsen: "I have to go to Minneapolis, then to Oklahoma, then back to Los Angeles."

"My wife and I will be leaving from L.A. to travel to Japan, as *Bad Golf Made Easier* is going to be opening there."

"I'm going to be on a Japanese comedy show, one I have done before. Now, I don't speak Japanese, and they don't speak English, but we know what's funny!"

"The Japanese sense of humour is very similar to ours. Pratfalls, fun, surprise — all the things that always make people laugh."

Tanner: When you finally get a chance to slow down, where do you go — to your home in Arizona?

Nielsen: "Yes. Arizona is the sanctuary. That's where I really slow down."

"I love down time. I love doing nothing. Laying on the bed, watching TV, thinking about what's in

the icebox. That's hard to do, you know; you never know when you're finished."

Tanner: What role will we see you in next?

Nielsen: "We're working now on a James Bond-style spoof. And hopefully we'll begin sometime in September or October."

Tanner: You were a dramatic leading man before *Airplane!* and *Naked Gun*. How do you explain the unusual shift to comedy at this stage in your career?

Nielsen: "I'm really doing today what I love. This is what I've always wanted to do, but I never had to guts to stand up and say 'I can do comedy.' I never had the courage."

"Comedy is dangerous!"

Tanner: That sense of humour and comedic intuition comes from your family, doesn't it?

Nielsen: "I think so. My mother and father were funny people, and my brothers and sisters were all bonkers."

"But the thing is, this is a characteristic that is very Canadian. We really have an off-the-wall sense of humour."

"When I come back here, I sure don't find myself going over anybody's head."

Tanner: Who makes you laugh?

Nielsen: "I love all kinds of comedy. Carol Burnett, Tim Conway, Peter Sellers — I love physical comedy."

Tanner: You worked with O.J. Simpson in *Naked Gun*. What are you thinking as you see him now, charged with the murder of his wife and her friend?

Nielsen: "O.J. and I were friends on the set and he was an absolutely charming, lovely man who I enjoyed working with immensely. That's about all I can say about him right now."

Tanner: When people see you offscreen, they see you as Frank Drebin. That must mean for some hilarious reactions, especially from young people.

Nielsen: "The overall reaction, whether 5-years-old or 95, is one of affection for the character of Frank Drebin."

"It constantly amazes me, because it crosses all the age lines. I get the thumbs-up sign from everyone, everywhere. I'm just amazed."

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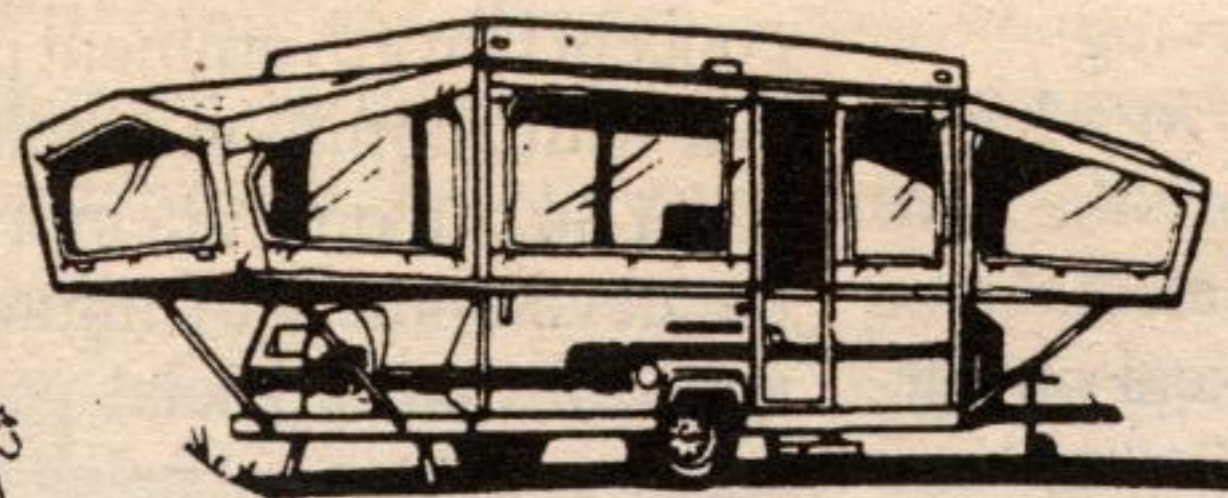


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