

Jimmy Kidd, estates manager at Gleneagles, and Walter Woods, links manager at St Andrews, travelled to Washington for the Golf Course Superintendents' Association of America conference and show. Jimmy reports the trip.

A capital show on Capitol Hill



A COUPLE of years have passed since SIGGA was represented at the GCSAA annual conference and show. It was, therefore, with a great sense of pride and responsibility that Walter Woods and I set forth from Edinburgh via Heathrow to Washington Dullis Airport.

The temperature in Edinburgh that day was an unseasonal 49°F. On arrival at Dullis at 5.00pm, the temperature was already -5°F and going down!

A rather agitated debate between us as to whether we should travel into Washington by taxi at the rate of \$30 plus tip or coach at \$9 was settled by a broken Scots-American accent encouraging us to "hurry up" and get into the bus. It was wonderful to hear once again the friendly voice of Stanley Carr from Del Rey, Florida, superintendent at the Gulf Stream Golf and Country Club.

A native of Tillicoultry, Stanley directed us to the GCSAA headquarters at the Sheraton Hotel, Washinton. There, we were met by associate executive director James Prusa who, in his usual efficient manner, had organised accommodation for us in the Hyatt Regency Hotel on Capitol Hill and within walking distance of some grand architecture.

The Smithsonian Institute has to be seen to be believed. The buildings record the history of everything from aviation to agriculture and natural history to art and the evolution of man display is vast.

This was the one and only occasion that I was delighted not to be accompanied by the wife, as the Natural History Museum contains some of the largest and most valuable stones in the world, including the largest uncut diamond. The Hope Diamond is priceless. I brought home photos so June and Caroline can drool at home.

Our Thursday and Friday thus occupied took our minds off the impending reason for our trip. Walter was to speak to the conference on Saturday and Sunday afternoons on The Thinking Superintendent and The Renovation Of The Old Course After The 1984 Open.

The GCSAA's organisation of all sessions is second to none. Carousels are available days previously. Slide projectors and rooms are laid on, leaving no excuses on the day.

The courtesy and attention paid to Walter during his first session and the comments afterwards were generous and encouraging to SIGGA.

We were particularly impressed by the quality of speakers, especially some of the younger superintendents, who have a lot to offer the profession. Their presentations were extremely professional and informative and not one of the older superintendents felt they could not learn something new.

The conference seminars cover such a diversity of subjects in a dozen rooms that it pays to be selective and choose a theme, whether it be budgeting and cost-control management, irrigation and machinery, preparation and renovation for major golf tournaments, man management and motivation, golf course architecture and many more.

To this end, and in the words of past-president James Timmerman, we went, we learned and we participated.

Walter's second session followed Robert Alonzi of Winged Foot Golf Club on preparing for the 1984 US Open and Theodore Woehrle of Oakland Hills preparing for the 1985 US Open. It is never an easy task speaking at conference level, but performing at such a gathering of internationals is even more nerve-racking. Walter was extremely relieved when his second 15 minute session was over.

The international session on the Monday was started by Rolf Lawgren of the Swedish Golf Federation. I followed with The Natural Experience Of A Game On A Classic British Golf Course.

The session began a little nervously as a voice admitted to having dropped a few slides. He was most apologetic and warned that they could now come up in the wrong order! I stood there saying: "Why me?" But a nod of confidence and reassurance from Walter set me off again with confidence.

Some sterling work from the back of the room and only one slide out of 80 was misplaced. I was exceptionally proud to see in the audience a large presence of the GCSAA's executive committee. It was our intention not to let our friends down and from the complimentary comments and



Ransomes stand.



Walter Woods at the lecturn.

attention paid to both of us, I felt we accomplished all we set out to do.

We were both encouraged greatly by the support from the 'classic' clubs in the British Isles, such as Turnberry, Troon, Royal St George's, Wentworth and others, whose superintendents and committee members contributed information and transparencies.

After our sessions were complete, it was time to take in the show. The GCSAA projection was for some 80,000 square feet of exhibits, which was extended later to 91,000 square feet, and more than 250 companies in attendance represented by some 2,000 top management and marketing personnel.

Three days were needed to cover the entire range of exhibits. The irrigation companies, whose

equipment—with the advent of printed circuits and micro-computers—has reached the stage of high sophistication needed to cope with the intricate programming necessary in the sun belts of America to prevent wilt, did good business.

Some of the financial problems of our clubs could, it would appear, be solved by a golf car fleet, which is big business in the USA with new shapes resembling modern cars and claiming "streamlining at 15mph."

One of the exhibits that attracted great attention at all times was the very best of British—our good friends Ransomes. Buying a company in the States called Wisconsin Marine has led to a goodly share of the grass-cutting market. Our friends in the States know a good company when they see one. We wish them

the best of luck.

Tuesday evening was taken up with the conference banquet and an unbelievable 1,250 people in the Sheraton Hotel Ballroom to hear retiring president Jas Timmerman confer the prestigious Tom Morris Award for services to golf on past US president Gerald Ford. His response to the award was most humble and his remarks a credit to his golfing partner Bob Hope. In fact, it appeared as if Hope had written the speech, such was the humour of it.

When the 1985 GCSAA conference and show closed, the expected relief from the organisers was tinged with regret. They live and breathe the GCSAA and its showpiece and are now looking forward to 1986 and San Francisco.

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