Tribute to an Old Turfman

I thought he would live forever, I have a copy of his book in which he wrote: To Jack, an old friend and fellow believer. I worked with him for many years and over those years we, on occasion, disagreed.

The one thing we shared in common was the belief this game of golf is played on turf and not mud. He was of the opinion that somewhere along the line we had sacrificed a fine hardwearing turf for visual presentation; it was as simple as that.

Some of the gems of wisdom he shared over the years I am sure that many greenkeepers agree with, while possibly disagreeing with how the message was presented. Unfortunately things change, not always for the better. The demands of today’s golfer, many of whom have never enjoyed the delight of playing on fine wiry grasses, and who today demand their courses should be pristine green, and they are always prepared to accept mud on the ball as long as they look good.

I always intended to give him a call and sadly never got round to it. There is no excuse for not catching up, being too busy was mine and today I regret it. I stumbled onto this poem and thought on this occasion it is very appropriate, the author is unknown to me.

Around the corner I have a friend
In this great city that has no end,
Yet the days go by and weeks rush on,
And before I know it, a year is gone
And I never see my old friend’s face,
For life is a swift and terrible race,
He knows I like him just as well,
As in the days when I rang his bell,
And he rang mine.

If, we were younger then,
And now we are busy, tired men.
Tired of playing a foolish game,
Tired of trying to make a name.

“Tomorrow” I say “I will call on Jim”
‘Just to show that I’m thinking of him.”
But tomorrow comes and tomorrow goes, and distance between us grows and grows.

Around the corner! yet miles away,
“Here’s a telegram sir”
‘Jim died today.”
And that’s what we get and deserve in the end.
Around the corner, a vanished friend.

Jack McMillan MBE, An old friend

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