

# Superintendent discusses pesticides on network TV... and lives to tell about it!

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** John Carlone, CGCS, was featured on the CBS Evening News on May 30 in a story about the perceived risks associated with golf course use of pesticides and fertilizers. Carlone has been superintendent at Middle Bay Country Club, an 18-hole private course in Oceanside, New York, for almost nine years. In the following interview with GCSAA *Government Relations Briefing*, Carlone explains why he agreed to appear in the CBS segment and how he prepared for it.

**Q: How were you approached to appear on the CBS broadcast?**

**A:** The article that appeared in the May 2 issue of *The Wall Street Journal* in which golf courses were denounced as health hazards disturbed me, and I faxed a copy of it to the GCSAA headquarters.

Evidently one of the CBS executives, who happens to be an avid golfer, also saw the article and suggested to a CBS producer that she do a story on it. She called GCSAA and was given my name, since I originally responded to the article with some interest. So she called me, and I agreed to do the interview.

**Q: Why did you agree to do it?**

**A:** The number-one reason was because I feel that golf courses are continually and wrongly accused of endangering the environment with misuse and over-application of pesticides and fertilizers, when — in fact — I think we are the most judicious users of those products in the world. I thought we should get some positive publicity out of it.

**Q: What did you do to prepare yourself for the interview?**

**A:** I only had 24 hours. The producer called me the day before, and we basically talked about everything that she would ask me about in the interview. I responded with the knowledge that I had acquired through my own research and reading. A lot of that material had come from GCSAA, as well as other golf- and agri-

*If another superintendent or any individual in this field ever has a chance to go before the media to make our profession look better, he or she should go for it. Don't be scared of the media...*

culture-related periodicals, particularly the *USGA Green Section Record*. I also have learned a great deal from university research, which is often presented at local and regional educational seminars.

**Q: Explain your position on pesticide and chemical use on the golf course.**

**A:** I believe that most — if not all — superintendents apply pesticides only when they have to.

We're just waiting and watching and making applications when we need to, instead of making blanket scheduled applications. The benefits of this are twofold: 1) we save our employer money; and 2) it's safer for the environment.

**Q: Why is it important for superintendents to do what you did?**

**A:** We are the ones who are using pesticides and fertilizers, and we are trying very hard to be professional about our jobs. The general public does not see us preparing and educating ourselves. All they see are the beautiful results of our work. That's why the more we put ourselves in the public arena, the more the public will see that turf management is a

sophisticated science and that golf course superintendents are professional about what they do.

**Q: Were you nervous about the interview?**

**A:** No. I would have been had they walked in with their cameras and immediately started taping, but they were here from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m., and they didn't start to interview me until after 5 p.m. So by that time I was very comfortable with these people. They knew nothing about golf. The producer wouldn't have known a green from a bunker, so they relied on me to guide them. The only thing they knew for sure when they arrived was that they wanted a picture of my spray equipment applying pesticides to the course.

**Q: Do you think the producer was fair?**

**A:** She was very fair. She wasn't negative at all. I was unhappy however, that the other two women who were interviewed didn't have any data to support their claims. I cited several studies that proved that pesticides are not a danger, including the Cape Cod water study and a Cornell University study in which 36 miniature greens are bombarded with pesticides and fertilizers and then irrigated to encourage leaching. Both of these studies show that the danger to the groundwater or the environment is minimal.

The media tends to blow these things out of proportion. Our studies are backed up with sound scientific evidence.

**Q: What type of reaction have you received from the segment?**

**A:** Superintendents from all over the country saw it and called me. All of them have been favorable, even though the overall segment was somewhat negative. It had to be negative to make the news. Still, the small amount that I was shown and also the light in which other superintendents were mentioned was somewhat positive.

**Q: Would you advise other superintendents to take a stand as you did?**

**A:** If another superintendent or any individual in this field ever has a chance to go before the media to make our profession look better, he or she should go for it. Don't be scared of the media; be careful what you say, but don't be scared. When I read something, I don't think of it as coming from an individual, I think of it as more of a profession-wide position.

**Q: Was your club supportive of your decision to do the interview?**

**A:** The club was very supportive. They wanted me to do it. They wanted me to look as good as possible. But, they didn't want their name mentioned. I even asked the president of my club before I agreed to do it. With all the lawsuits that are being filed against private clubs these days, they just didn't think it was a good idea to have the club's name mentioned. I agree with them.

*Interview conducted by Laura Schaffer for the July 1994 issue of GCSAA Government Relations Briefing. Reprinted with permission.*

## Groups sue EPA over inert ingredient list

WASHINGTON (AP)—Two private groups filed suit against the Environmental Protection Agency on May 18, accusing the agency of breaking the law

by refusing to release the names of all ingredients in pesticides.

The EPA allows pesticide manufacturers to keep some inert ingredients off pesticide labels by claiming they are trade secrets, said the Northwest Coalition for Alternatives to Pesticides and the National Coalition Against the Misuse of Pesticides.

Inert ingredients can be any of more than 2,300 substances, including chemicals that are active and, possibly, toxic, the groups said.

A substance qualifies as "inert" if it plays no role in killing the pest the product was designed to eliminate, they said.

The suit asks the court to declare the policy illegal and order the agency to give the groups a list of all ingredients six pesticides: Roundup, Aatrax 80W, Tordon 101, Weedone LV4, Velpar and Garlon 3A.

"This is one of few laws that precludes access to basic information about toxic ingredients," said Jay Feldman, NCAMP executive director. GCSAA members who attended the 1992 New Orleans Conference and Show may remember Feldman from his presentation at the first-ever Environmental General Session.

"People have a right to know when it comes to exposure to toxic substances," Feldman said.

EPA Administrator Carol Browner was named as a defendant in the suit, which was filed in U.S. District Court in Washington.

The groups asked the EPA for a list of ingredients in the six pesticides in April

1991, under the Freedom of Information Act.

The EPA initially denied the request, saying the ingredients were "confidential business information" and exempt from disclosure rules, according to the suit. But the agency said it would issue a final decision after consulting manufacturers of the chemicals.

The EPA gave the groups a list of the ingredients in three of the pesticides the following December, but all inert chemicals were blacked out. Makers of the remaining three pesticides claimed blanket confidentiality for all ingredients, the agency said.

The groups were able to get some ingredients by making direct requests to the manufacturers.

Pesticide companies should not be allowed to keep any ingredients secret, Feldman said.

"Business interests are not what's being protected. The actual ingredients can be determined by reverse engineering," he said. "The only people who don't know is the public."

The Northwest Coalition for Alternatives to Pesticides, based in Eugene, Ore., has about 1,600 members. The Washington-based National Coalition Against the Misuse of Pesticides comprises 200 community groups across the nation.

*This Associated Press story was printed in the June 1994 issue of GCSAA Government Relations Briefing. Reprinted from that publication with permission.*

## Tifton Physical Soil Testing Laboratory

*Specializing in:*

- Testing All Materials for USGA Golf Green Construction.
- Developing Putting Green Rootzone Mixtures that meet USGA Specifications.
- Recommending Topdressing and Bunker (Trap) Sands that meet USGA Specifications.
- Developing Sportsturf Rootzone Mixes with Optimum Physical Properties for Athletic Fields.

1412 Murray Avenue  
Tifton, Georgia 31794



T. Powell Gaines  
(912) 382-7292