Editorial features in tune with springtime

Spring has arrived. As many of our readers prepare courses for seasonal play, I'd like to mention a few items that may be of interest to you.

The next couple of issues will offer some interesting editorial features.

The May issue will feature a special section on golf cars, with these products available. In June, the planned feature will be especially interesting. The staff will survey subscribers at 30 premier courses across the country to determine product and equipment preferences in key categories.

On to another subject. I had the pleasure of presenting our Architect of the Year award to Tom Fazio at the recent opening of the Bayou Club in Largo, Fla. Listening to Tom comment on the course design while senior professional George Archer led a foursome around the great new course, Tom's love for his work was evident.

By the way, Archer shot 62 on this tough course played from 6,700 yards. See page 41 for more details on this facility.

Are you noticing more high-tech products entering the golf course industry? We saw some at the GCSAA show, from biodegradable tees to warning systems for hydraulic leaks to moisture retaining soil, and everything between.

I believe our industry is on the verge of continuing new technology to make our industry environmentally sacred.

Please remember... If you are not receiving Golf Course News monthly, fill out the card which will pop out at you, a few pages back. Be sure to fill it in entirely and sign it.

I look forward to your questions and comments.

My, how times have changed... EPA who?

By Vern Putney

A quarter-century ago, there was no Environmental Protection Agency, and the golf professional was recognized by the press as the golf club's official spokesman.

Now, scarcely a move relating to course site, construction, recondition, renovation or improvement is made without considering EPA impact.

Course superintendents, long content to labor anonymously in the background, increasingly are trying to make their views known to a media that for many years would have been put to identifying the super by full name, but knew pro shop staffiers well.

That was understandable. Shop assistants dealt directly with the sports staff, calling in tournament sweepscores and funneling other routine information.

And admittedly the super's efforts at complete course coverage, a 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. job, starting with greens dew sweeping in the early morning and lugging water hoses around the course in the evening, left little time for chit-chat with the Fourth Estate.

It should be conceded that a call from the pro was a bit more glamorous than being frequently cynical press contact than contact by a work-a-day course super whose subject might be too technical to grasp and interest to the public.

Here I should inject that one such call changed my life.

Clayton V. Sweeney, veteran pro at Riverside Golf Course in Portland, Maine, was friendly with Portland Press Herald sports editor Blaine Davis. Sweeney called Davis Nov. 1, 1984, stating that his assistant had just wound up seasonal employment and was interested in the newspaper's business. Were there any job openings?

Four days later I was a sports writer, decidedly unqualified but most enthusiastic.

And what a whirlwind 35 years! As Davis often commented wryly, "It beats working." A comparable call from a course super would have carried little weight. The relationship between the sports editor and press relations-conscious Sweeney served as job entry.

Those of us introduced to golf as caddies in the Great Depression learned early that, while six-time Maine Open champion and later National Senior champion Ernest W. Newman was to be properly admired for playing skills and rigid adherence to game rules, there was much toll and activity behind the scenes at Portland Country Club.

Greenkeeper (as it was then known) John Parsons presided over FCC course fortunes for two decades, and successor Ernest "Pete" Ruby was to rack up a half-century of service.

They remained in the background, not necessarily shining the spotlight, but immersed in what they felt was their main function, course maintenance and improvement.

It's now a new era. Modern technology has eased back-breaking labor. Where once it was necessary to grab a shovel, the super now must reach for the phone or bang away at the typewriter or computer to get his message across to the public via the media.

While the old-timer would have been uncomfortable in that role, the modern super accepts and in most cases welcomes as an integral part of his job the dissemination of information. He's bolstered by...