Our pal Paul, direct advice & the old Mark

J ust a few things to jot down before they slip into the grey abyss of memory's darker recesses, never to be found:

• Before me on my desk sits the latest missive from old friend Paul Harvey, that geriatric horse cannon with the non-sensical. This time he asks about the golf course industry, the U.S. Golf Association (USGA), chemical missive from old friend Paul Harvey, that geriatric loose cannon conspiring to keep poisonous pesticides on the market. The basis of Harvey's treed broadcast on March 14, is a segment by this week's guest, Jerome Blondell: "If people buy pesticides are safe; they are making a big mistake." That's it — that's essentially the whole argument. Mr. Blondell is described as a spokes-

Media and environmentalists take shots from colleagues

A h, the Golf Course Show. A time of education. A time to renew friendships. A time to entertain. And, this year, the period for long-time enemies of the golf industry to point accusing fingers at their colleagues:

• Case-in-Point One: ABC-TV consumer reporter John Stossel, admitting that "in many ways I've been part of the problem," adds, "Here is where we in the press have done such a bad job... We practically run from scare to scare. We say this kills people, that kills people. We have focused on the dramatic in an interesting way — economics. It sells newspapers. It gets people to watch programming..."

• Stossel puts pesticide risks into a context you rarely see mainstream reporters do, saying: "Do we ever put it in perspective and rank the risks? No. Buckets kill 50 people a year. A garage doors kill six. It's a big country..."

• While flying takes one day off the average life and fires (killing 4,500 people a year) 18 days, Stossel said pesticide take 27 days off ("Many scientists we talk to said there is no evidence pesticide residues kill anybody," Stossel noted, "but the worst study we could find predicted 6,000 cancer cases. Let's say that is true and they all die and another 10,000 people die."). Murder (47,000 annual deaths) accounts for 113 days; smoking 5.5 years. "Compare this to driving. Pesticide use is hardly a risk. Compare it to smoking: Five and a half years. It points out the absurdity of the smoker worrying about his cellular phone giving him brain cancer," he said.

• Case-in-Point Two: Audubon Society of New York President Ron Dodson, speaking on environmental groups; "Many have become top-hat, bureaucratic organizations.

Letters

CHEMICALS ARE NOT A COMMODITY

To the editor:
Your article on distribution (Page 1, April 5) was very inappropriate at this point in time for the industry. Everyone is facing increasing marketing cost, regula-
tions, registration and competition. In fact, in these rising costs, manufacturers, suppliers and distributors must develop long-range plans and strategies to be sure our product will survive, and those that don't will disappear.

The comments regarding fer-
tilizers and chemicals as com-
modities is correct to a point. And that point is, in our partic-
ular industry — developing and marketing turf protection prod-
ucts — we must continue to up-
grade and improve our people, products and services to avoid becoming commodities, I, therefore, would take exception with the conclusion in the article that specialty chemicals are currently a commodity.

The agricultural market-
requirement requires specialized prod-
ucts, formulations, packaging, technical information and distri-
bution. The marketing of our product differentiates us from row crop agriculture. We have a distributor to end-user distribution system (unlike agri-
culture, in which the distributor is distributor/dealer/end-user distribution process) and if this system can continue to successfully meet the manufacturer and customer needs, direct marketing by manufacturer will not happen.

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Here's a novel idea, both to generate traffic for the company and money for research: SubAir, Inc. promised to donate $2 to USGA Green Section turf research for every signature gathered on its Wall of Fame at its booth at the GCSAA trade show.

We have a new title for head golf course superintendents, offered up by superintendent Kevin Ross (CGCS) of Country Club of the Rockies chief executive agronomist (CEA). It might become a national movement, but it might be hindered by the possible abundance of acronyms following the super's name on his or her business card. An example: Chris Happenstance, CGCS, MG, CEA, PhD.

GCSAA Director R. Scott Woodhead of Valley View Golf Club in Bozeman, Mont., speaking in Maine on the many challenges facing superintendents, said the very first greenkeeper, Old Tom Morris, didn't have many resources to work with. He added: "If the EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) has its way, we won't have many resources to work with, either. We have approximately one-tenth of the chemicals available to us today that we had 10 or 15 years ago. That's not all bad because a lot of chemicals applied back then should not be applied today. But more chemicals are being taken off the market than are being brought onto the market — which will make it that much tougher for us to maintain the strict standards that are placed on us by members."

One blessing of The Philippines' Mt. Pinatubo deal, course architect Robin Nelson said, was that "we were able to study the effect of ash on the turfgrass. We found that in small quantities it's an excellent top dressing material — but you wouldn't recommend it in 3-foot layers."

The Champions at Summerfield is "different from the kinds of projects for which [Tom] Fazio is most noted, because there are not that many lower-budget projects that get press," said Fazio lead architect Jan Beljan. "It doesn't matter if it's a house, office building, golf course, airplane, or car. Who writes about Yugos?"