

Our pal Paul, direct advice & the old Mark



Hal Phillips,
editor

Just a few things to jot down before they slip into the great 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 loose cannon with a penchant for the non-sensical. This time he asserts the golf course industry, the U.S. Golf Association (USGA), chemical manufacturers and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) are conspiring to keep poisonous pesticides on the market. The basis of Harvey's screed, broadcast March 14, is the following statement from Jerome Blondell: "If people assume pesticides are safe, they are making a big mistake." That's it — that's essentially the whole argument. Mr. Blondell is described as a spokesman for the EPA's pesticide office, whatever that is. Harvey then refers to a pair of golf course studies now underway and five completed studies dealing with pesticides in the home. From this he deduces, "Golf clubs and their USGA cannot hide behind the EPA anymore." I imagine folks at the EPA and your average superintendent would be flabbergasted to know they're all carrying the same banner, according to Paul... Copies of Harvey's most recent foray into dementia can be obtained by faxing a request to RISE at 202-872-3860.

- A quick note to all you distributors out there who read our story on page 1 in February's edition ("As distribution shrinks, firms go factory direct"): By acknowledging that many smaller firms are employing direct-marketing techniques, the reporter (in this case, me) was not urging people to go factory-direct. I was simply reporting on a phenomenon that no one disputes. If I was to give advice on the subject — something I wouldn't dream of doing, considering my scandalous lack of experience in the distribution biz — I would urge folks to read this month's letter from Bill Liles (see below). If the consumer perceives there to be

Continued on page 68

Media and environmentalists take shots from colleagues

Ah, the Golf Course Show. A time of education. A time to renew friendships. A time to entertain. And, this year, time for longtime 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," added: "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 more people to watch our programming..."

Stossel put 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. 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 pesticides 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-heavy, bureaucratic, increasingly



Mark Leslie,
managing editor

Continued on page 50

Letters

CHEMICALS ARE NOT A COMMODITY

To the editor:

Your article on distribution (Feb. '95, page 1) was very appropriate at this point in time for the industry. Everyone is facing increasing marketing cost, regulations, registration and competition. In face of these rising costs, manufacturers, suppliers and distributors must develop long-range plans and strategies to be successful. Those that do will survive, and those that don't will disappear.

The comments regarding fertilizers and chemicals as commodities is correct to a point. And that point is, in our particular industry — developing and marketing turf protection products — we must continue to upgrade 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.

Turf and ornamental marketing requires specialized products, formulations, packaging, technical information and distribution. This is unique to our market and differentiates us from row crop agriculture. We have a distributor to end-user distribution system (unlike agriculture which 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.

So, how will those distributors now servicing this industry continue to be successful? By adding value to their services to customers. No big secret, but something few distributors put forth effort to do. If current distribution system doesn't make this change, they will lose to the low-price marketer that is larger and more efficient.

I'm sure you will receive several letters from the distribution trade, some of them our distributors. Our message will remain the same: Have a sound plan, quality people and sell the value of your people, products and services!

B. R. Liles, director
Ciba Turf & Ornamental
Greensboro, N.C.

USE THE MEDIA FOR YOUR PURPOSES

To the editor:

Golf course managers who recognize the power of the press can attribute a great impact on their businesses. The dissemination of positive information about a course and its services is cost-effective, and is read as accurate and objective. It reaches the masses while not perceived as a paid advertisement. Make certain, however, your club is very well prepared to handle the business fostered by writers, reporters and editors.

The advice here is to approach communication via editorial as "the last free enterprise in America." This is precisely why

concerted efforts should be made to enhance positive working relations with the print and electronic media.

Billy Casper Golf Management, Inc., for one, prides itself in an open door policy with the media: event invitations, media-only tournaments, frequent player cards and flexibility with tee times often extended to the media. In some cases, we actually formalize a small media entertainment budget.

Reciprocal efforts come through "golf tips" columns authored by PGA professionals, as well as appearances on radio and local TV sports shows to speak about area golf, improving listener/viewer golf skills, and (to a supplemental albeit camouflaged degree) the benefits of your own course. You cooperate with the media, and press releases about tournaments, activities, special offers, and capital improvements at the course are "picked up." Furthermore, editorial placements can even be in lieu of budgeted advertising expenditures.

Take note, managers: Get to know and support local editors and producers. Media relations, community relations, word of mouth, frequency of name reinforcement, and golfer interest in your course are closely correlated. The payoffs are increased traffic flow and a healthier bottom line.

Rich Katz, director
Billy Casper Golf
Management, Inc.
Vienna, Va.

AND FOR OUR NEXT TRICK... VIEWER MAIL

Barbara B. Beall, who is married to Glens Falls (N.Y.) Country Club superintendent Chris Frielinghaus, submitted the following Top 10 list, in the spirit of David Letterman. Behold! The top 10 things she has observed being married to a superintendent:

10) He is the only person in the family who gets undressed outside the house at the end of his work day.

9) "My husband has really strange tan lines."

8) "He never listens to what I have to say when he gets home, but listens to every word that Jenneta Jones says on The Weather Channel."

7) All his co-workers look

like the cast from *CaddyShack*.

6) When he wakes up at 3 a.m., it's not to go and see his girlfriend, but to make sure the irrigation system turned on.

5) "All the post-it notepads in our house say 'Pro Lawn' on them."

4) "My husband has a spot of black grease on every piece of clothing he owns."

3) "We have the ugliest lawn in the neighborhood."

2) When he talks in his sleep, or, for that matter, when he is awake, he states, 'Ah, the smell of Dursban.'

1) "When he helps me vacuum, he always stripes our carpet in a checkerboard pattern."

Publisher
Charles E. von Brecht

Editorial Director
Brook Taliaferro

Editor
Hal Phillips

Managing Editor
Mark A. Leslie

Associate Editor
Peter Blais

Editorial Assistant
J. Barry Mothes

Contributing Editors
Terry Buchen, CGCS, MG
Vern Putney

Editorial Advisory Board
Raymond Davies, CGCS
Merced Golf & Country Club
Kevin Downing, CGCS
Willoughby Golf Club
Tim Hiers, CGCS
Collier's Reserve
Dr. Michael Hurdzan
Hurdzan Design Group
Mary P. Knaggs, CGCS
Hazeltine National Golf Club
Roger Maxwell
Management Consultant
James McLoughlin
The McLoughlin Group
Kevin Ross, CGCS
Country Club of the Rockies
Brent Wadsworth
Wadsworth Construction

Production Manager
Joline V. Gilman

Circulation Manager
Brenda Boothby

Editorial Office
Golf Course News
PO Box 997
38 Lafayette Street
Yarmouth, ME 04096
207-846-0600; Fax: 207-846-0657

Advertising Office
National Sales:
Charles E. von Brecht
227 Second Avenue North
St. Petersburg, FL 33701
813-898-7077; Fax: 813-825-0923

Western Sales:
Robert Sanner
Western Territory Manager
2141 Vermont
Lawrence, KS 66046
913-842-3969; Fax: 913-842-4304

Marketplace Sales:
Diana Costello-Lee
207-846-0600; Fax: 207-846-0657

Golf Course Expo Sales
Michael Lafaso
207-846-0600; Fax: 207-846-0657

Subscription Information
Golf Course News
P.O. Box 3047
Langhorne, PA 19047
215-788-7112

United Publications, Inc.
Publishers of specialized business and consumer magazines.
Chairman
Theodore E. Gordon
President
J.G. Taliaferro, Jr.



Copyright © 1995 by United Publications, Inc. All rights reserved and reproduction, in whole or in part, without written permission from the publisher is expressly prohibited.

Leslie comment

Continued from page 12

focused on negative agendas, and seem to oppose anything that anyone proposed at any location.

"We have seen a solemn attempt to convince the public that the environmental issues we face today are so complex and convoluted, the only meaningful contributions that individuals can make to environmental improvements is in the form of checks...

"We also see increasing evidence of a negative focus on environmental issues that may not be significant environmental problems at all — just in an attempt to raise money."

These groups have dehumanized environmental issues to mold public perception, Dodson said. "In many instances, it appears we have forgotten that industry, small businesses, and the golf course business are made up of people," he said, "people who may have families, housing, property, jobs and perspectives that are different than our own but nevertheless, people who are caring, concerned and dedicated human beings."

The media and environmental groups are easy targets for the golf industry, just as golf has been an easy target for them. In this age of enlightenment, we should all look inward for flaws. Some in the golf industry have, indeed, been doing that for some years now. The results are real, demonstrable and calculable. Simply look at the findings of the USGA-funded research (*see story on page 24*), at the vast increase in biological pesticides coming onto the market (*see story on page 1*), at the great numbers of courses joining Audubon-type programs (*see stories on pages 15 and 20*).

More needs to be done. Signs are, that the train has left the station. But, rest assured, we will keep a look-out and let our readers know if we spot any train robbers lurking in the high brush out of town.

The Golf Course Builders Association of America raised \$68,000 in an auction at its annual banquet, and will donate \$12,000 of the proceeds to GCSAA's environmental research. The biggest ante? A seven-foot-tall statue of a Scottish golfer, which went for \$20,000 to Tom Tonto of Tonto Construction.

Dr. Michael Hurdzan, on receiving the Distinguished Service Award: "If the value or worth of any award is in proportion of the value of the person giving it, this is the highest award I've ever gotten. The GCSAA and GCSAA members have earned the respect and admiration of the entire golf industry — for your technical knowledge, your dedication to service, and your professional conduct on a day-to-day basis under public scrutiny."

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.

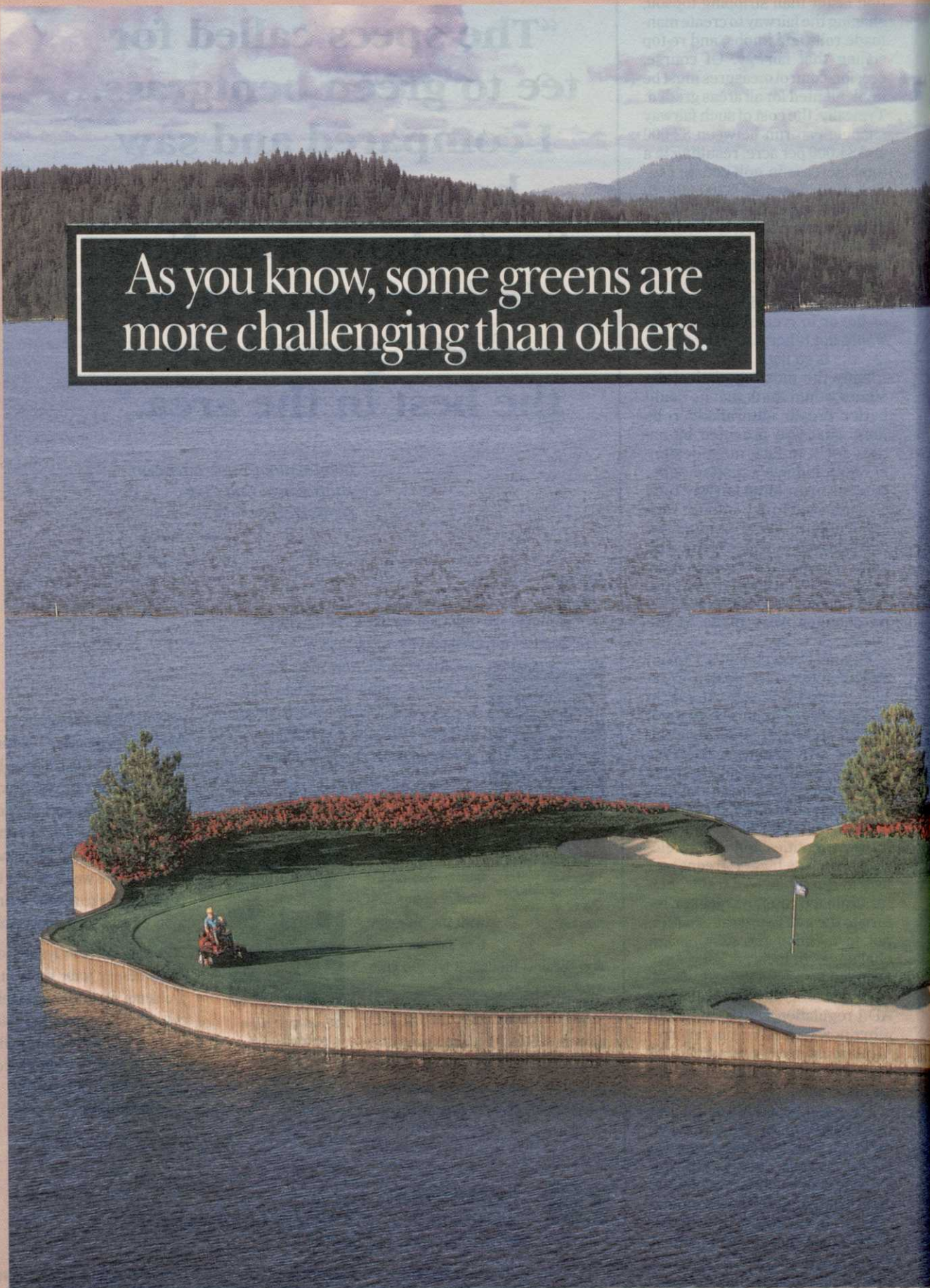
GCSAA Director R. Scott Woodhead of Valley View Golf Club in Bozeman, Mont., speaking in Maine on the many challenges facing superintendents, said the very first greenkeeper, Old Tom Morris, didn't have many resources to work with. He added: "If the EPA [Environmental Protection Agency] has its way, 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 ordeal, 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?"



As you know, some greens are more challenging than others.