

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

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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

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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."

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