
Two tributes to O. J. Noer



By FRED V. GRAU

When the brave Norwegian heart of O. J. Noer stopped beating, there came to an abrupt end a unique and fascinating legend. In the history of turf there has been nothing like it anywhere. Revered by golf course superintendents across the land, he also commanded the respect of the scientific world concerned with soils, plant nutrition and grass ills.

Photography was almost a way of life with O. J. His color slides are known wherever turfgrass meetings and conferences have been held. He seemed to have an uncanny knack of being there when the action took place.

To many golf course superintendents he was their counselor in good times and bad. A buddy in trouble might mean a flying trip across the country to soothe the spirit and to cool things off.

The familiar term "Doc" Noer testifies eloquently to the reverence in which he was held. Many times over he had earned a doctorate degree without having it conferred. Once started on his illustrious career, there simply was no time for the details of an advanced college degree.

Words cannot restore him to the turfgrass world but they give some solace and help to recall the indomitable spirit which carried him and his colleagues across a desert of doubt and helped to satisfy the thirst for knowledge. The Foundation which bears his name will continue the Noer tradition for the ultimate benefit of future generations.

He passed this way but once—we are glad that we were here to see and work with him. He has earned his Rest.

By HERB GRAFFIS

O. J. Noer, 75, died July 12 in Milwaukee, of cancer, after 13 weeks hospitalization. Noer, for years agronomist with the Milwaukee Sewerage Commission, was the most widely known turf expert. He visited the majority of courses in the U. S. and worked in a consulting capacity with their superintendents and officials.

After his retirement from the Milorganite organization he was associated with the late Dick Wilson as turf advisor then went with Robert Trent Jones, doing the turf experting on Jones' architectural jobs in the U. S. and abroad. He was active in the Jones organization until his terminal illness.

Oyvind Juul Noer was born in Stoughton, Wis. His father was a physician. He attended schools in Wisconsin and Germany prior to entering the University of Wisconsin where he graduated in 1912 with a B.S. in soils. He later taught general and analytical chemistry at the University of Wisconsin. He was overseas in World War I as a Captain in Chemical Warfare Service. He also taught chemistry in service schools in France and England.

He was soil chemist for the Great Northern Railroad, State Soil Chemist for Wisconsin and sales manager of the truck division of the Stoughton Wagon Co. before he returned to the university to do graduate work, helped in part by a fellowship created by the Milwaukee Sewerage Commission for research in Milorganite.

Noer spoke at far more turf confer-

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*bent
grass*

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NOER TRIBUTE

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ences than any other expert. He popularized colored photographs as lecture material and as progress reports and in making photography a tool of course management showed superintendents how to save time and money and have available data for expert studies and recommendations. To Noer, more than to any other man, today's standard of golf turf is due. He received the USGA Green Section award and was honored by golf course equipment and supply companies that established the O. J. Noer Turf Foundation financing research and scholarships. The Golf Course Superintendents Association at its 1960 annual meeting presented a program feature of his career, illustrated by numerous pictures.

He was one of the best technical writers in any field of applied science as GOLFDOM's staff and its readers can testify from the handling and utilization of many valuable articles he wrote for GOLFDOM. He was one of the greatest all-around men in golf business. A comparative appraisal of Noer's service to golf would show him as having contributed more to enjoyment and better scoring in the game than any of the celebrated players.

Among Noer's innumerable valuable services to golf was his preservation and development of the strain of bent which, after a devious history ranging from the present site of the Pentagon building at Washington to Beechmont CC at Cleveland, then to a nursery operated by "Blondie" Wilson and Allan Bland at Toronto, has appeared as one of the superior putting surfaces. Charley Wilson, Noer's successor at Milwaukee Sewerage Commission, suggests the strain be labeled "Noer bent." •

THREE COURSES

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Gleneagles CC, Lemont, Ill., where the 1958 and 1959 Chicago Opens were played. Then, from 1931 until around 1940 he had interests in Indian Wood and Park Forest CCs, both Chicago district courses that have since been subdivided. He also leased Trout Lake (Wis.) CC and Beverly Shores, an Indi-