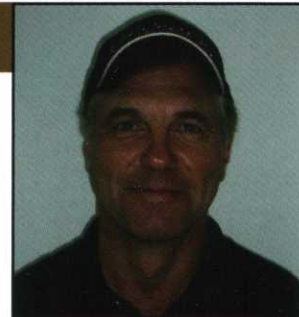


Reminiscing and Remembering

By RANDY WITT, CGCS
Hong Kong Golf Club



Musings on a quiet afternoon in early February. The last two years have been as busy as any time during my career in the golf business. The preparations leading up to the Equestrian Event of the Olympics in August; getting the Equestrian track back into golf course shape; preparing for the 50th Hong Kong Open in November; and then heading directly into our golf season. Then the Christmas holiday season followed by the Lunar New Year in late January. Although at times rather hectic and pressure filled, the journey has also been a time of fun and of experiencing a lot of new and memorable experiences and situations.

This year's winter weather has been warmer than the winter of 2008 with the exception the two mornings during late December when all the courses were covered with an early morning frost.

Previous winters I have observed scatterings of frost, but never to the extent of the frost events of this year. Two frosty mornings was as much cold winter weather as I cared to experience. I had thought that upon venturing to Hong Kong, I would miss the weather of a Wisconsin winter. I have always enjoyed plowing snow and have been an avid snowmobiler. But I must admit that never having to scrape the windshield of my vehicle

and not dealing with a snow shovel has been enjoyable. Wearing nothing heavier than a sweater and light jacket has been a pleasure and enjoyable to say the least. In a typical Hong Kong winter, from the period of early December to late January, sweaters are the norm.

Outside of that period, golf shirts are the standard dress. I must admit I do miss the glistening, peaceful appearance of the golf course after a covering of fresh snow and the clear, blue skies of an early winter morning. But I do not miss salt, sand, slush, ice covered roads and streets, as well as dead poa as the reward of enjoying some winter pleasures.

Recently I was discussing with one of our young assistants some of the varying aspects of course maintenance equipment and practices that I grew up with as well as the changes I've observed over the years. It was enjoyable to reminisce and talk about the past and to look forward to what the future might hold. The idea of heading out in the early morning hours to walk mow the greens, change cups, set tee blocks, and touch up the bunkers in one journey around the 9-hole course in my first superintendent's position brought a look of "You've got to be kidding" to the face of the young assistant. Periodically we all need to take the trip back through time to appreciate where we are and in many cases appreciate the beauty and pleasure from that trip.

Reminiscing and remembering of some experiences and practices such as:

- The joy of using the first string trimmer after previously pushing a rotary all day to trim around trees
- Topdressing greens and tees with a flat shovel and level lawn
- The Hahn riding greens mower
- Drinking Billy Beer
- The indestructible National trim mower
- Paying less than a thousand dollars for a Jake walking greens mower
- The first Toro sand pro
- Mowing fairways with a tractor and 5-gang pull set of mowers, setting the rollers, and then going back out to mow rough
- Getting a good laugh while watching a young summer employee attempt to back up a 5-gang pull set of mowers
- Listening to the grinding of gears of a Cushman operated by a seasonal employee
- Lowering the height of cut on greens to 3/16" for the Men's Club Championship
- The yearly pesticide program consisted of:
- Applying 2,4-D to roughs and fairways for weed control
- Early summer application of Chlordane for insect control
- Summer application of Thiram for Dollar Spot and Brown Patch
- Late Fall application of Calo-Clor or Calo-Gran for Snow Mold control



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An Adventure in Life-

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- Late Fall application of Calo-Clor or Calo-Gran for Snow Mold control

This program produced rather clean turf all season

- Introduction of the spray hawk.
- Irrigating greens and tees with a hose and roller basin set in the middle of the green or tee
- Prepping bunkers in the early spring with a roto tiller to get them loosened up
- Bunkers were treated as a hazard
- Kentucky Bluegrass was the preferred fairway playing surface maintained at 1 fi inches
- Pennncross was the Cadillac of bent grasses
- Greens chairmen had no idea what a stimpmeter was used for
- A club board meeting lasted less than 30 minutes
- A visit from the Milorganite agronomist provided a wealth of information and was free
- The introduction of Tersan 1991
- After topdressing a green by hand, dragging in the topdressing with a steel drag mat that a couple of employees

pulled because your boss wouldn't allow any type of vehicle on the green

- The introduction of sand topdressing on greens
- The Ryan Greensaire 18 was the aerifier of choice
- The Cushman calendar - and having it signed at the National Convention
- Attending the Golf Course Superintendents Convention in the Twin Cities and seeing the brightly colored sports jackets covering the shivering bodies of the southern superintendents
- Still waiting to see Dr. Duich exhale from a drag on his cigarette in class
- Going home from the golf course for dinner and then returning after the Night Waterman called in sick
- The Night Waterman not showing up because he predicted it was going to rain
- At the age of 20 getting your first Superintendent's position
- Signing your first contract for \$ 7,200 / year with no benefits and feeling rich. The thrill of having your first \$100,000 golf course maintenance budget
- Arnold Palmer, Lee Trevino, Gary Player, and Jack Nicklaus battling for a victory.

• Hank Aaron, Harmon Killibrew, Fran Tarkenton, and Bart Starr being great without using steroids

- John Deere only manufactured agricultural equipment
- Cushmans were dark green.
- F-10s and Parkmasters were the fairway mowers of choice
- Ford was the golf course tractor of choice
- Mowing greens every other day except on weekends
- Distributors and suppliers published catalogs with product prices included
- Snow mold, dollar spot and brown were the only diseases you worried about.
- Golfers were satisfied with just having some green grass to play on
- Trial and error was the University of choice

For many who do recall some of these events and remember these happenings, hopefully it was a hard but extremely rewarding and satisfying journey of some good memories. For those too young to have lived and experienced these happenings, hopefully you too will be able to look back with satisfaction on your years to come for your Adventure in Life.

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