



From The President

What's In A Name?

Did ya ever wonder about the names of some of the pesticides that we use on our golf courses? Do you remember the good old days when chemicals really sounded dangerous? The names alone were enough to warrant a healthy respect for the toxicity of these chemicals. Compare the names of chemicals in the past (some of which are still in use today) to the more modern names:

Old Chemicals

- | | |
|--------------------------|--------|
| Toxaphene | DDT |
| Calcium Arsenate | PMAS |
| Lead Arsenate | Sodium |
| TCA | |
| Amino Triazol | Dimet |
| Potassium Cyanate | Diquat |
| Disodium Methyl Arsenate | |

New Chemicals

- | | |
|----------|-----------|
| Primo | Banner |
| Pace | Subdue |
| Reward | Merit |
| Prograss | Finale |
| Gallery | Dimension |
| Acclaim | Image |

What is the use of these newer names trying to tell us? Is anything more than two or three syllables too much for us to handle? Should we feel good about using Image? Is Primo really primo? Is Finale really the final application? Is applying Reward somehow better or safer than applying Diquat?

Sometimes I get the feeling that the guys who come up with these names are the same group that came up with the idea for *New Coke*. Should we all feel safer using these great sounding chemicals? Do your members feel better when you tell them you're spraying Dimension on their fairways rather than MSMA? Maybe they do, but should they? Are people really so naive that they don't question the use of these cute sounding modern chemicals, or do the marketing people just think so? Do the lawn care companies choose to spray Merit because it sounds safer than spraying Proxol? Are their customers better served by this decision? Should a mother feel safe putting out a cute little roach motel on her kitchen floor

where her cat, or worse yet, her infant has easy access to it?

Why am I knocking the chemical industry? I'm not. Chemicals are a necessary choice as part of a well thought out pest management program. But don't think for a minute that these chemicals are risk free because they sound so wonderful. The name might lure you into a false sense of security. Nevertheless, these are still toxic pesticides and should be used and handled as such. Use them wisely, with all the caution and safety you can provide.

Now that summer is over, there are lots of events schedules for the next few months. Don't forget to sign up, and in some cases early sign up gets you a discount. Check out the calendar on the last page for more information.

Richard Lavine, CGCS
President

GCSAA — Hosts Public Relations Meeting

By Bob Costa

In early October, I traveled to Lawrence, Kansas, site of the GCSAA headquarters, to participate in two days of meetings with GCSAA staff and members of the Public Relations Committee. The meetings were scheduled to discuss the various public relations programs being considered by the Association and to critique, as well as develop new ideas for the Association's most prominent public relations effort, "Par For The Course".

For those of you who are members of GCSAA, let me begin by saying it was a great experience to be a part of the excitement at headquarters. We are currently being led by an organization that is truly committed to its membership and promoting our industry.

GCSAA public relations efforts are directed by Pat Jones, Director of Public Affairs and Scott Smith, Director of Media Relations and Video Services. The thrust of their efforts are aimed at promoting and occasionally defending the golf course maintenance industry. This is accomplished through the development of a variety of new programs. Included in our discussion were

(Continued on Page 4)

EDITOR

Richard Lavine, CGCS
415-454-6450

OFFICE

Barbara Mikel - Exec. Sec'y
550 Main St., Ste G
P.O. Box 3360
Diamond Springs, CA
95619
Phone: (916) 626-0931
Fax: (916) 626-5132

PRESIDENT

RICHARD LAVINE, CGCS
Peacock Gap Golf & CC

VICE-PRESIDENT

LEON SNETHEN
Saratoga CC

SEC'Y/TREASURER

KEN SCHWARK
Tony Lema Golf Course

PAST PRESIDENT

RANDY GAI
Claremont Country Club

DIRECTORS

BLAKE SWINT
Castlewood Country Club

ROGER MARTINEZ

Sherwood Greens Golf
Course

ROBERT COSTA, CGCS

Laguna Seca Golf Course

WAYNE LINDELOF

Lone Tree Golf Course

AFFILIATE ADVISORS

MIKE LIGON
H. V. Carter Co.

BOB WHITTAKER

NSTC/Farmtec

PUBLISHER

Jo Harlow
Key Publications
Phone: 510-827-9676
Ph/Fax: (510) 674-1688

THRU THE GREEN

Published monthly by the
Golf Course Superintendent's
Association of
Northern California

“Strictly Business”

By Bob Costa

It's no secret that a productive maintenance staff is one of the keys to a successful maintenance operation. The benefits are not only reflected in a better maintained golf course, but also in fewer employee related headaches.

Having a productive work force becomes more critical when your operation is limited with a small staff. What's the solution? It begins with hiring competent employees, then providing the proper training and guidance so they can succeed. Sounds simple doesn't it? We've no doubt heard about it in seminars, or read about it in books on management before, but how do we make it work for us?

After years of frustrating experiences I have developed a system which I feel has worked very well at our golf courses. Here's how it works.

Begin by making a list of the qualities you expect from your employees. For me it's: **Communication Skills** - How can we train our employees, and set performance goals if we can't communicate? **Reliability/dependability** - Employees are of no value if they're not at work, or not on time. **Have pride in their performance** - All of what we do is visual, employees who care about quality are essential. **Motivation** - There's always more work than there is time. Employees who aren't productive are a handicap.

Once you know what it is you want, it's time to go find it. Take interviewing seriously. Develop a list of questions that helps you determine whether an employee has these qualities, and don't hesitate to mention, up front, that you demand these qualities from your staff. Check references and never hire an individual after the first meeting.

Bring them back several days later for a more informal interview on the golf course. You'd be surprised what you might learn. Lastly, don't be swayed with someone's golf course or maintenance experience, unless this is one of the conditions you have established for hire. Maintenance skills can be taught, character can't. I've never seen a supervisor who has been able to teach an employee pride.

Once you have reached a decision and hired an individual, the next step is to provide sufficient training. To be truly effective, training should occur prior to an employee setting foot on the golf course. One of the biggest pitfalls of on the job training is it never gets done, or it gets done poorly. Here is some information you should consider including in a new hire training program: a job description, a

policy, safety and procedural handbook specific for the maintenance department, safety training and equipment operation videos, and a tour of the golf course and maintenance facility.

Most training programs fail because they are rushed, and poorly organized. Try using videos, written materials and a checklist that outlines the training program to help make the training more efficient, freeing you up, so you can fulfill the other requirements of your day.

As an employee is transitioning into his, or her job, they are naturally curious about their performance. Take this opportunity to communicate with them regularly, and provide constructive feedback. This is your chance to reinforce good performance and correct bad habits before they become chronic. I have found that a

(Continued on Page 6, Col. 3)

GCSAA — Public Relations (Cont'd)

By: Bob Costa

comments on the development of environmental principles for golf courses in the U.S., professional image and titles, Audubon Schools, a new slogan for the Association, corporate sponsorship of events and "Par For The Course."

Many ideas were exchanged by the committee whose members geographically represent the membership. The consensus amongst the group was that we are pleased by the direction and efforts being made through the various programs, however, one thing is very clear. In order for any of these programs to succeed they must be embraced and supported by the membership.

The role of GCSAA is to develop the programs and provide the resources for public relations efforts. It is our responsibility as members to get involved at the grass roots level and make a difference.

One of the most exciting activities during the meeting was the opportunity to participate in the planning of "Par For The Course". For those of you who have never seen it, it can be described in one word — **impressive**. For an Association of our size (15,000) it's quite a feat to have a weekly television show on a major network. The biggest complaint, justifiably so, is the 4:30 a.m. west coast time slot on Sunday morning. Unfortunately ESPN calls the

shots on this one, however, in 1996 episodes will also be shown on ESPN 2 Wednesday nights at 10:00 p.m.

Although it is certainly a show we should want to watch, the target audience are golfers, and an occasional non-golfer. One excellent suggestion was to tape several episodes and show them in the pro shop throughout the day. Just think of the audience you could capture while the golfers are waiting out a frost delay.

The show format is designed to encompass all aspects of golf, including features on environmental projects and maintenance practices, its message is simple, promote and add exposure to golf course superin-

tendents. Commit to helping make it happen.

If I could summarize my feelings as I returned home, it is that we are being led at the national level by bright, dedicated individuals who truly have the best interests of superintendents at heart. The low road would be to sit back and follow their lead, let them fight the battles while we lose the war. I challenge each of you to find a way in which you can raise the image of golf course superintendents just one notch. Take advantage of the opportunities and resources which are available and travel the high road. Make a difference. ♦