From The President

The Superintendent/Pro Golf Tournament held on Monday, July 22nd at the San Francisco Golf Club was a huge success. I have heard nothing but praise for the condition of the course and the hospitality extended by the Club. Contrary to popular belief there is a great deal of work and effort that goes into the planning and preparation of a tournament of this nature. Blake Swint was the chief architect and did a marvelous job of coordinating to make it all come together. Barbara Mikel, our Executive Secretary, was also involved in this effort. Most of all we would like to thank our colleague and host Robert Klinesteker, Superintendent, and the members of the San Francisco Golf Club for giving us the opportunity to enjoy their course.

Has the heat got you down yet? I can truthfully say, I’m tired of it. In 1995 from January 1st through July 31st we had twelve days where the temperature went over 90 degrees. In 1996 for the same period of time we have recorded thirty-two days of over 90 degree temperature. My water bill is soaring.

A new feature in our monthly newsletter is an article entitled “Boardroom Briefs”. This is a synopsis of what has transpired at our monthly Board meeting. This feature gives the membership an opportunity to see what your Directors are dealing with and also an opportunity to comment or ask questions.

Now is a good time to start making plans for the Annual Superintendent’s Institute. This year’s Education Program will be in the Santa Cruz area with golf at Pasatiempo Golf Course. The dates are November 11th and 12th. See you at the next meeting.

Joseph Rodriguez, CGCS
President

Boardroom Briefs

- Regarding Issues involving the State Association, an idea has been proposed to develop a State Directory for use by the State Membership. Concern has been expressed by GCSANC representatives that the membership rosters not be made available to other sources. Also, an annual dues payment was made to the state totalling $2,105.00.

- Committees were established for the 1997 state meeting which will be hosted by the GCSANC. The committees include Site, Education, and Tournament. Those interested in serving on one of these committees should contact Association President, Joseph Rodriguez.

- Discussion continued on the new membership card. A final decision should be reached at the next board meeting.

- Payment of Directors Insurance premium was approved. Directors Insurance is required as a condition of the Affiliation Agreement with GCSAA.

- Forrest Arthur reported back to the Board on the feasibility of having, for sale, a limited line of GCSANC logoed merchandise. After discussion, a final decision has not been reached.

- Dave Davies, Research Chairperson reported back to the Board on the research projects being conducted at Sunnyvale Municipal Golf Course and the Research Field Station. Dave will summarize the current status of the projects in a future newsletter article.
Modern technology allows a number of things to happen at a rapid pace today. This availability of instantaneous response has lead the populace to become what I call an "immediate society". It seems that everything in life is now so urgent that we need it yesterday: "Would you fax that to me right now? Page me as soon as you get that. Leave a message on my answering machine. Call me on my cellular immediately. Leave me an E-mail message. Ship it Next Day Air." All common responses from people in the 90's.

In my opinion, the pace that technology is changing is placing an additional stress on everyone in our society and especially those in agriculturally related businesses like golf course management. Golfers can develop unrealistic expectations as to how fast things should happen regarding growing grass at their courses. Their minds are clouded by how rapidly the rest of the business world moves around them due to modern technology. They don't understand that grass does not grow one bit faster in 1996 than it did in 1976. They forget, or refuse to believe, that Mother Nature is in control of the growing environment as much or more than the superintendent. They need to understand that there will never be a computer made that will control temperature, humidity or positioning of the sun. Technological advances aside, this issue is significantly influenced by our society having become increasingly distanced from agriculture in their day to day lives. Gone are the days where three out of five jobs in America were somehow related to agriculture. Today the number is approximately one in ten.

I don't want these statements to discount the improvements made in this business. We certainly have better and more advanced chemicals, mowers and irrigation equipment than twenty, or even ten years ago. This has allowed the conditioning of golf courses to improve greatly. The fact still remains, however, that all this makes very little difference regarding how fast a damaged green, tee, or fairway recovers. All the computer chips, cellular communications, and faxes in the world cannot make grass resist an attack of a fungus, insects, germinate more rapidly, or develop into a mature turf any faster than Mother Nature will allow. Technology may allow you to order a truckload of sod a bit quicker, but that's about it.

Some superintendents fall into the technology trap themselves, constantly searching for the magic elixir in a bottle. Just add some of this or inject some of that, and everything will be okay. They, too, are searching for that unrealistic, immediate response. In reality, the solution often requires improving the growing environment and most importantly, being patient. Cutting down a few trees to improve air movement and provide additional sunlight
"Sorry I Haven't Written Sooner"

My association with the newsletter began shortly after I was elected to the Board of Directors in the spring of 1995. My interest in being involved with Rich Lavine, CGCS, who served as the editor at the time, was to contribute valuable, useful information to the membership on issues and events affecting our Association and Industry. When I accepted the editorship this past spring my desire to pack the newsletter with information became even stronger. After all, it's the only means by which we can communicate directly to each member 12 times per year.

My goal was, and still is to rely on, in part, the general membership and affiliates for newsworthy bits of information. Those of you who have responded I am thankful for your contributions. Those of you who lie in waiting, please don't hesitate to fax me an idea or an article. I have been around long enough to know this desperate plea has been made before. Perhaps I'm naive, but I'm hoping this time maybe it will be different. I hope all of you are aware that there is some financial incentive as well. $500.00 to be exact. As a previous recipient I can honestly say that was one trip to the bank I didn't mind standing in line for. Whether your motivation may be financial, or you just have something to say, at least give it a thought.

Is Perfection A Realistic Goal?

One of, if not the greatest causes of stress and burnout in the golf maintenance profession is a superintendent’s relentless desire to attain perfection. The often prescribed remedy is to set realistic goals, settle for less than perfect now and then, and develop balance in your life. Imagine my surprise when I stumbled across this short article which suggests perfection is really were it’s at.

Customer satisfaction is the bottom line of the quality movement. It might seem, during the stress and bustle of a typical working day, that one little mistake made here or there doesn’t really matter to the bottom line. That if on the whole, your customers are pleased with your product, it’s okay not to strive for perfection every single time.

We may thing that our work doesn’t have to be “perfect.” How could one little error every now and then make much difference? In an article entitled, “99.9% Right Isn’t Good Enough,” author Jeff Dewar says that if things were done right 99.9% of the time in the United States it would mean:

- Two unsafe landings at O’Hare International Airport each day.
- 16,000 lost pieces of mail per hour.
- 20,000 incorrect drug prescriptions per year.
- 500 incorrect surgical operations performed each week.
- 50 newborn babes dropped at birth each day.
- 22,000 checks deducted from the wrong accounts each hour.
- 5 missed putts, per golfer, per round (just kidding of course).

Quick Quotes

"Most of my ideas belong to other people who didn’t bother to develop them."

Thomas Edison

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Communications — Public Relations

by Joseph Rodrigues

As the Superintendent on the Rossmoor Golf Courses, I would estimate that 60 to 80 percent of my time is spent on some form of communication. This would be speaking, listening, writing and reading. There are also the various levels of communication, such as the informal face-to-face exchange, using the telephone, and the more formal types which would include (1) letters, (2) reports and recommendations to the Golf Advisory Committee, (3) budget preparation and justification, and (4) record keeping, such as weather data, pesticide usage reports, absentee records, and material inventories. What and how I communicate to my peers, the golfing community, and the golf course maintenance crew, plays an important role in the public images and opinions of how you view the organization.

Communications and public relations interact in most phases of golf course operation. I will explain how it is up to me, as the Superintendent, to use the communications skills I have learned to actively promote good communication and good public relations at the same time.

One of the areas in which I have built a good image for the company is in the way I have conducted myself with the crew. It is very important for the crew to have a good self-image of themselves and also of the Superintendent. When the crew is out working on the course and in the public eye, they are also in direct verbal contact with the golfers. If they speak favorably about me, they will also speak favorably about the company. The golfers, in turn, will pick up they are doing it. For example, “We have to mow the course twice each week because we are having the major golf tournament. There will be many participants who do not reside in Rossmoor.” This gives them a reason why they are doing it and makes them more interested and proudful in how they accomplish it.

I keep the crew members up to date on company policies and directives. In order for me to convey these policies and directives, I have to know the why and wherefores. I have to know and be able to explain to them because these communications may have a direct effect on how they perform their job. It is also a bad idea to ridicule a company policy in front of the crew. If I do it, they will also feel it’s okay and the good relations that have been carefully built up are eroded.

Effective communication is needed at all levels of the chain of command. I could be talking to my assistant, the golf course crew, club officials, golfers, or the Golf Professional. It is also very important for me to carefully select the terminology I use when addressing them, since the comprehension of turf grass terms most probably varies considerably among these groups. The effectiveness and efficiency with which I communicate with these groups is essential to gaining their support and respect.

Handling golfer and resident complaints on the golf course is almost always a challenging experience. Most of the time this experience can be turned into a positive effort and further your public relations effort.

Telephone calls and messages I receive cannot be overlooked. By answering telephone messages promptly, you again give the impression that you care. Your telephone manner when answering and talking on the telephone also gives people insight into how they feel about you and your organization.

Some other things I have done to further public relations on the course and for the company is to play golf with the residents when invited. I also encourage my assistant assistant and crew to do the same thing. I always listen to their complaints or comments and write them down in my notebook. I carry a notebook with me at all times on my daily rounds of the course. If it is at all possible, I answer their questions. If not, I write them in the notebook and respond at a later date. By writing it down when I talk to them on the course, it gives them a sense of validity. By following through and responding to their complaint at a later date, they know that I am concerned and that I care. I thank them for their concern and I have another convert on my side.

It took me a little while at Rossmoor to learn that many times when residents come to see me with complaints, they were not really there to complain. They mostly just wanted to talk to someone, and they knew I was there.

Rossmoor is a retirement community, and the average age of residents is 75.4 years. Many of them are widows and widowers, and I have seen from experience here that many of them are just lonely. Also, at Rossmoor, a great majority of the residents and golfers I encounter have been in positions of authority. This fact, also, makes for sticky situations, because when you combine the age factor and authority, you have a person who can be difficult to deal with. What I have to do is be patient, be a listener, be considerate, be firm, and know exactly what I am talking about when confronted with this type of situation.

Handling golfer and resident complaints on the golf course is almost always a challenging experience. Most of the time this experience can be turned into a positive effort and further your public relations effort.
Communications — Public Relations (Cont’d)

Every time you come in contact with someone, you leave some type of impression. If I have communicated a sense of pride in my staff, they in turn will communicate that pride to the public, then you have generated public relations. When I communicate to a golfer or resident with respect and they respond with respect, that is public relations.

I also meet monthly with the Golf Advisory Committee. This advisory committee is composed of Rossmoor residents whose primary concern is the maintenance and upkeep of the golf course. This Committee does not make decisions on what I should be doing or give me direct orders. What it does is gather information from all sources concerning golf course activities and then make recommendations based on this information. As a member of the Rossmoor staff and Superintendent of the courses, I am one of the sources for this information. Each month I write a report for the Committee, and at the meeting I give an oral report regarding what maintenance activities have transpired in the past month. Also mentioned are problems regarding fungus activity on the greens and manpower needs. It is within the realm of the Committee to recommend equipment purchases, major budget requests, and staff requests. What I have to do is communicate my needs in a positive way and solicit the goodwill we have built up in our relations. At the present time, this relationship is functioning because all of my requests have been recommended.

The recommendations were passed because of the open line of communication that exists between myself and the Committee, and because of the mutual respect we hold for each other. We also have a common goal, and that is the maintenance of a quality golf course.

The posting of signs in the clubhouse is another means of keeping the golfers informed. There should always be something posted. I have learned that if people see the same sign every day, they will soon tend to ignore it altogether. What I do is post course conditions daily, such as, the course is wet, frost on greens, course is closed, or spraying in progress. Whatever it is, the golfers are being made aware of the problem before they encounter it on the course. This is good public relations, and it is also extremely important to keep the golfers informed of hazards as part of my duties.

I have learned from experience that communication is a means of imparting ideas and making myself understood by others. This exchange can only be successful when mutual understanding results. Understanding is also a personal matter between two people. If the other person hears what was intended for him to hear, then communication has taken place.

There is no question in my mind that communications and public relations go hand-in-hand. Every time you come in contact with someone, you leave some type of impression. Like when I talk to my staff. If I have communicated a sense of pride in my staff, they in turn will communicate that pride to the public, then you have generated public relations. When I have communicated to a golfer or resident with respect and they respond with respect, that is public relations. This interaction of communication and public relations is visible in all aspects of the golf course operation, and it can only be heightened by working on and improving these communication skills.
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GCSAA News:
By Gary K. Carls, CGCS
Report on GCSAA Scholarship Committee
Meeting
August 17, 1996

♦ There are several Scholarship programs available
to students through GCSAA for Both Turfgrass
Students and children of GCSAA members.

♦ Changes are currently being made to make
present scholarships available to a wider segment
of students.

♦ One possible new program discussed include
some type of intern program to assist Turf
Researchers.

♦ Also under discussion is trying to make scholarships
of some type available to current superintendents
continuing their education in college curriculums.

Other items of note:
♦ GCSAA is hoping to strengthen and broaden
member involvement in the Audubon Program for
schools.

♦ GCSAA is planning a silent auction at the Las
Vegas Convention Show to support the Robert
Trent Jones Fund.

Look for further details on these items in upcoming
editions of Newsline and Golf Course Management
Superintendent Pro Results

Team Gross
Michael Basile 69 Santa Clara Golf & Tennis Club
Mike Paul 69 Palo Alto Hill Country Club
Michael Garvale, CGCS 70 Mountain Springs Golf Course
Jim O'Neal 70 The Oakmont Golf Club
James T. "Ty" Abraham 71 Peachtree Golf & Country Club
Michael Clark, CGCS 72 Greg Hanway 73

Team Net
Terry Grasso 64 Burlingame Country Club
Joby Ross 64 Corral De Tierra Country Club
Richard Scholes 65 California Golf Club
Gerry Greenfield 66* California Golf Club
Roger Robarge 66* Pruneridge Golf Course
Mark Doss 66* Delta View Golf Course
Thomas Wallick 66* Delta View Golf Course
Jeff Johnson 66* Delta View Golf Course
Douglas Holcomb 67 San Mateo Golf Course
Joseph Fernandez 67 San Mateo Golf Course

Low Gross Pro
Mike Paul 70 Santa Clara Golf & Tennis Club
Gerry Greenfield 73 Corral De Tierra Country Club
Mark Doss 75** California Golf Club
Tom Ringer 75** Blackhawk Country Club
Shane Balfour 75** Diablo Grande, Ranch Course
Jim O'Neal 75** Palo Alto Hills Country Club

Superintendent Individual Net
Terry Grasso 71 Burlingame Country Club
Randy Gai 72* Claremont Country Cub
John Grant (Retired) 72* San Mateo Golf Course
Blake Swint 76 Castlewood Country Club
Forrest Arthur 77 Links At Spanish Bay

Individual Gross
Bruce Olsen 77 Emerald Hills Golf Course
David Hayes 80* Salinas Golf & Country Club
Dave Davies 80* Palo Alto Municipal Golf Course
Walt Barret 81 Green Hills Country Club
Ross Brownlie 81* Links At Mariners' Point

* Tie Breaker Matched Cards
** Third Place Tie

Strictly Business
By Bob Costa

The most common form of harassment in the workplace occurs between a supervisor and a subordinate. But what about the actions of co-workers. As hard as you may strive for teamwork and harmony amongst your staff, some form of employee confrontation is inevitable. As a manager, you may be held responsible not only for your own actions and behavior, but also the interactions of those employees under your supervision.

Harassment, whether motivated by discrimination or some other form of conflict can result in arguments and disputes in the workplace. When it involves co-workers, your responsibility as a manager is to respond quickly and attempt to diffuse the situation. Failure to do so may result in future issues of liability for both you and your golf club.

As I mentioned, the key is to respond quickly as soon as you become aware of a conflict amongst employees. All members of your staff have a right to work in an environment that is safe and non threatening. It's your responsibility to ensure that those conditions exist.

Disputes among employees can often be resolved before any formal disciplinary action needs to occur. Here are some suggestions about how you can mediate disputes before they escalate into major conflicts, or even lawsuits.

♦ Speak to Each Employee Individually — It’s important to get each side of the story.

♦ Meet privately with other employees who may have witnessed a confrontation or dispute — This can be helpful to sort out the facts. You may find that other employees may not be willing to provide information simply because they don’t want to be involved.

♦ Gather the disputing employees in a private location to talk. Privacy is important because it generates trust. Set rules for meeting. Such as, allowing each individual to speak uninterrupted. Allow each individual to state his, or her version of the conflict. Summarize your understanding of the problem. Make it clear that the behavior which resulted in the dispute is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. A solution must be reached.

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Strictly Business (Cont’d)

♦ State your neutrality — Be certain that each individual understands your role. You are not concerned with assessing blame but, simply to identify the problem and resolve the conflict.

♦ Carefully manage the discussion — Make sure only one person speaks at a time. The goal is to gather the facts. Ask each individual to summarize their views and the views of the other party. Try to direct the discussion so there is some agreement among the employees as to what the problem is. This will go a long way toward a compromise and lead to a solution. More often than not the individuals involved will find the problem is simply one of poor communication.

♦ If the parties can’t agree on a solution be prepared to impose one — Try to make it as equitable as possible, so one individual doesn’t feel as though he is the only one losing. Usually in these types of disputes fault can be found with each party. Once a resolution is agreed upon, declare the dispute over with and thank the employees for their cooperation. Remind them of the fact that a continuation of this conflict will not be tolerated and suggest that further disputes may result in disciplinary action.

♦ Follow up — After a few days, check to see that the resolution is working. Monitor the situation every few weeks and be quick to respond if you sense the conflict is heating up again.

Nothing Happens Fast (Cont’d)

or rebuilding a problem green will often offer faster, longer lasting results than any “over the counter” bottled cure. Golfers would rather you throw thousands of dollars away on snake oils and additional chemical “fixes” than address the real agronomic issue, right? Unfortunately, it’s true in some cases. As Dr. Joe Vargas once said, “Golfers would rather get rid of a superintendent than a tree.”

Sorry, folks! I just don’t think the magic potion in a bottle will ever be found. If it is, you can look for me to be selling it, because the payoff should be better than winning the lottery. Nothing can replace good agronomy and good growing environment. Nothing in a bottle, bag or box. The formula to keep turfgrass healthy is simple, provide adequate water, soil aeration, ample sunlight and good air movement with a little N, P and K on a regular basis. Each of these ingredients is essential in proper amounts, omit one, add too much or too little of another, and a weak link develops. That weak link leads to the one thing that does happen fast in agriculture - - crop failure! So, always remember, nothing happens fast in agriculture, except crop failure. ♦

Rosenstrach Receives Professional Certification

David Lee Rosenstrach, superintendent at Orinda Country Club, has been designated a Certified Golf Course Superintendent (CGCS) by the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America.

Rosenstrach has been superintendent at the Orinda, California course since 1987. He lives at 5885 San Pablo Dam Rd., El Sobrante.

As a part of the certification process, an on-site inspection of Rosenstrach’s golf course operation was conducted by two Certified Golf Course Superintendents: Randal C. Gai, CGCS, at Claremont Country Club, Oakland, and Wayne S. Lindelof, CGCS, at Lone Tree Golf Course, Antioch.

Did You Know?

The use of sun hats, or safari hats as a form of head protection for golf course maintenance employees does not meet the current Cal-Osha safety code? Please be reminded that if you purchase these types of hats for your employees you may be held responsible for any injuries that might occur.

For information regarding acceptable head protection, contact your insurance carrier or Cal-Osha.

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