The policeman walked into the office and solemnly announced, “You’re under arrest.”

There must be some mistake, Hans Bross thought. But he looked out his door and saw his foreman with a camera. He knew it wasn’t a mistake, just a practical joke.

His crime? Show ing too many buffalo grass. There must be some mistake, just a practical joke.

He knew it wasn’t a mistake, just a practical joke.

Just as a golf course superintendent essentially has every member as boss, a cemetery manager has to answer to every plot owner. And some do complain.

Buffalograss sparks many of the complaints. “It greens up late and turns brown early,” he explains, his Paul Newman-blue eyes sparkling. “They think it’s a weed. It’s scattered. If it were all in one place I could explain it.”

The other problem with buffalograss is that the sod can’t be saved and replaced after the crew digs a grave. Most of the cemetery is a fungus-resistant blend including Baron, Georgetown, Fylking, and Benson A-34 Kentuc ky Bluegrass with some fine Manhattan rye. Bross is even growing a small sod field to save on costs of replacements.

When saving the sod, it’s easy to pinpoint grub and sod webworm problems. A dose of diazinon or Oftanol usually takes care of it.

Although he’s experimented with PGRs around headstones, his crew uses Weedeaters.

Another major concern is staining the stones with fertilizers. After trying several, he settled on slow-release Nitroform-Blue Chip from BFC Chemical or Par-Ex brand.

Only the new sections of the cemetery are irrigated. About 30 acres remain undeveloped, although Bross develops and seeds a new section about every two years, based on plot sales.

Besides his landscape duties, Bross takes care of cremations.

Bross, a member of the Board of Directors of the Nebraska Turfgrass Foundation, says the cemetery industry has a long way to go. “Until this industry starts to recognize that there are professionals out there and will pay accordingly, they’re going to have problems,” he says.

He’ll work for the cause now, but he talks frequently of retiring, taking off in a motor home, and spending winters traveling through the South with his wife Eleanor. Of course they’ll always return to Omaha to be near the grandchildren.

Want to see their pictures? —

Heide Aungst