

Viva Las Vegas!

Jack McMillan, Sunningdale course manager and EIGGA president, reports his trip to the spectacular GCSAA annual show and conference...

With my wife, I joined a party of delegates at London's Heathrow Airport bound for the Golf Course Superintendents' Association Of America's 55th International Turfgrass Conference And Show in Las Vegas. There was a sizeable British contingent when the various groups assembled in Las Vegas from several tours organised for greenkeepers, groundsmen and members of the turfgrass industry.

I had looked forward to the trip—my first visit to the United States. I must confess I am not keen on flying, but the flight via New York was very comfortable. After 16 hours travel, we were delighted to get to our hotel and a well-earned rest.

Las Vegas, Nevada is designed for the gambler and holidaymaker and is fast becoming one of America's main convention centres with 450 conventions a year. Las Vegas has a wide variety of entertainment and we were taken to several shows, including an amazing magic show that had disappearing lions and tigers! We also enjoyed a spectacular



This view of the Hoover Dam was captured during a tour by helicopter.

review and evening at Caesar's Palace, where the cabaret was headed by singer Diana Ross.

Thanks are due to all our generous hosts including Philip York, Archie Paterson and David Jenkins. We could not resist a visit to the gaming machines and although our fortunes fluctuated, I think we broke even by the end of the day.

We also drove out to the Hoover Dam, where we enjoyed a breathtaking flight over the lovely Lake Mead and the dam itself. This was definitely one of the highlights of the trip. The scenery was quite spectacular and unlike anything we had seen before, although it did seem that the pilot thought he was



A 'swish' entrance to the Flamingo Hilton, Las Vegas.

auditioning for a James Bond film!

I was very impressed by the sheer professionalism of the GCSAA who promote this annual event, which is specifically designed to meet the educational and professional requirements of the golf course manager and turfgrass maintenance industry.

The GCSAA strive to cover a wide variety of subjects by inviting the best speakers available for this important occasion. There were 122 individual presentations, a total of 325 hours of continuous educational sessions and if delegates missed any, they can still hear the presentations as the week's programme is available on tape.

I was pleasantly surprised when attending the first lecture, by Geoffrey Cornish on the master architects. He talked about Willie Park and up flashed Sunningdale—it made me feel quite at home!

The show is not as extensive as



Activity in the hall.



Las Vegas By Night! An insomniac's delight, the place hardly stops...



One for the family album by Rita McMillan.



Windsor, but being indoors and aimed exclusively at the golf-course market makes it unique. It was nice to see the British stand with the Union Jack and EIGGA flags. It created great interest with American and Canadian visitors—wherever greenkeepers meet, they always have so much to share and talk about. I understand this is the first time a British stand has been included in the

show and hopefully it won't be the last.

In just 20 minutes, I found myself talking to superintendents who had left ten foot snow drifts at home and others from the desert regions and the Southern States who had all-year-round vigour in growth and winter temperatures that never drop below 60 degrees.



A toast to the show by Bob Osterman, GCSAA immediate past president.

The show attracted all the manufacturers we would normally see at Windsor and while I did not find anything revolutionary among the machinery, there were a number of improvements and additional facilities that will be available to us in this country in the near future.

I left the show with the impression that we are going to hear more from the Japanese in the manufacture of machinery quite soon.

For any greenkeeper on a visit abroad, a trip to a golf course is a must. Gary Myers, course superintendent at the Desert Inn Golf and Country Club, kindly arranged a visit to his course for Gerry Coley and myself. The course measures 7,089 yards from the blue tees and with its many large lakes and lush green presentation, I could hardly believe I was in the middle of the Nevada desert.

The greens are of a sand structure and the grasses are bermudagrass oversown with ryegrass, which gives them constant colour and vigour. The ryegrass is dominant in winter and summer. When temperatures exceed 100 degrees, the bermudagrass comes into its own. Gary said he had used about 40 tons of ryegrass seed the previous year.

Some interesting facts for comparison are: aeration—four passes per year; staff—22 full-time; rounds of golf—65,000 a year and a budget of \$1,000,000. At the time of our visit, greens were being cut at three sixteenths of an inch and the pace as read on a stimpmeter was six foot. Desert Inn is on the USPGA tour and during an event, the height of cut is dropped to a tight eighth and the pace of the greens moves up to eight feet on the meter.

On the question of pace, it was most interesting to talk to William Bengeyfield, western director of the USGA Greens Section, who expressed the view that seven to

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eight feet was the general average across the country.

I left Desert Inn thinking Gary does a first-class job. It is, of course, difficult to explain to American golf-course superintendents about our lovely links and acid heaths, where grass is dormant for six months of the year and we play golf 365 days of the year. Whoever said greenkeeping is the same the world over?

John Schilling and James Prusa, executive and associate directors of the GCSAA, invited us to the show banquet and, as president of EIGGA, I was afforded a seat on the dias with the honoured guests. Stars of the show were Arnold Palmer and Bob Hope. Palmer presented The Old Tom Morris Award to Hope for services to the game. Palmer made an excellent speech and Hope told some wonderful, if irreverent, stories in reply.

This was followed by officers of the GCSAA toasting themselves and the association with the SIGGA whisky the last team of visiting Scots presented. I promised to tell Walter Woods that the stock was running low—a promise I have duly carried out! The evening ended with the '50s and '60s cabaret, which was enjoyed by the 1,200 guests.

Viva Las Vegas! Continued...



'Marshall' McMillan with his side-kick Howard Swan.



The show's British Booth attracted a great deal of interest. Here, David Jenkins of Charterhouse Turf Machinery and Jack McMillan man the stand.

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