

SILVER ANNIVERSARY

25 Progressive Years Of The Mid-West Golf Course Superintendent's Association

by John MacGregor

Not having any records or data of the Association to go by since it's origin, there may be omissions which are not intentional, because there are numerous members who contributed much toward the advancement of the Mid-West. Presidents who have served during the past 25 years, I have spoken of briefly, not having at hand, their contributions to the Association.

This being the 25th Anniversary of the organization, perhaps a review of the origin and progress made during the span of 25 years would be of interest to your members, charter, regular and associate.

The organization of National Association of Greenkeeper's of America was formed at the Sylvania Golf Club, Sylvania, Ohio, in the month of September, 1926. At that meeting, officers and directors were chosen to direct the affairs of the Association. The writer was one of the directors chosen. The National President, John Morley, requested me, being the director of that district, to get the greenkeepers together for a meeting with the purpose of organizing in that district. A simple request, but what a mighty task it turned out to be. My family and myself worked for two weeks getting the first notices out, with the aid of the FRAZER GOLF YEARBOOK. We sent notices to every club in the States of Wisconsin, Iowa, Indiana and Illinois. Five-hundred in all and out of the 500, sixteen interested men came to the first meeting, which was held at the Great Northern Hotel at Jackson and Dearborn Streets in November, 1926.

The first officers were chosen from among those at this meeting and were as follows:

PRESIDENT John MacGregor
VICE-PRESIDENT Alex Binnie
SECRETARY Ed. B. Dearie
TREASURER Fred Sherwood

The name of the association was decided on and the name chosen was the Mid-West Greenkeeper's Association. The directors names I do not recall, however, committees appointed were, by-laws and membership; these committees being the most necessary toward the building of a young organization.

The following year the by-laws were drawn up with the aid of a lawyer, submitted to the membership and accepted. Regular monthly meetings were held and problems were discussed, which at that period was something unheard of. It was really difficult to speak of his experiences on any subject, as many of that era, guarded their secrets zealously. However, as time went on and more meetings were held, the boys reflected a more friendly attitude toward each other, problems were being discussed more freely.

Our membership increased month by month through members discussing the association with greenkeepers at other clubs who were not eager to join, until they were better informed on the aims and objects of the association. As time went on, more committees were appointed, which were thought necessary.

My mind has been so concentrated on our Association, I almost forgot to tell you about the first National Convention, which was held in the Sherman Hotel in Chicago in the month of March, 1927.

The Mid-West Greenkeepers Association being the host, all arrangements had to be made for this event by our Association. Every member very actively participated to make it a success.

If my memory serves me right, I believe there were 80 greenkeepers there from many parts of the country. Through the cooperation of John Morley, President and Robert Powers, who by this time was the Editor of the National Greenkeeper, we were able to present a very fine list of speakers for our first turf conference.

Everyone was very much enthused about the progress made in the few months the greenkeepers had been organized. The Convention was a complete success and the M.W.G.A. was congratulated for it's fine work.

The Association progressed and membership increased. The same officers were elected for the year 1927 and again in 1928. By the end of 1928, the membership had increased to 90 or more.

Alex Binnie was elected President for the year 1929. The association kept pace with the previous years; interesting meetings continued, golf was played and more of the members became interested.

Matt Bezek was elected President for the years 1930-1. Under Matt's regime, interest kept pace; meetings continued during the golf season at the clubs where the greenkeeper was a member and where the meeting and dinner were held, those who did not play golf walked over the golf course, interested in the condition of the particular course. Some very interesting discussions developed, pertinent to maintenance problems.

We had bi-monthly get-togethers for golf (such as President Stupple is now advocating). Everyone who played golf had to turn in his score card to the Chairman of the Golf Committee, to establish his handicap for the annual tournament. The Association donated a cup which had to be won three times by the same person before it became his property. The rule for the tournament was anyone competing for the cup had to play 36 holes the day of the tournament. There was always a good turn-out for this event.

Ralph Johnson was the next President for the years 1932-3. Ralph's tenure in office was very successful and the association continued to go ahead with interesting meetings and golf. The Winter meetings, which I forgot to mention, were held in a hotel in Chicago. The N.A.G.A. Convention was held in the Sherman Hotel in Chicago and was the most successful convention yet held. The committees were very active. Ed Dearie was the General Chairman and did a wonderful job. The Mid-West was highly complimented for it's fine work.

Gus Brandon was President during the year of 1934. The association continued to grow in membership and interest during his term of office.

Cyril Tregillus was President for the year 1935. He was an excellent executive.

Frank Dinelli was the next President and served for the year of 1936. Frank was a strong advocate of the short course in greenkeeping.

John MacGregor was again President during 1937-1938.

Harold Clemens was President for the year 1939. He was a very methodical man in his administration.

Graham Gardiner was President during the years 1940-1. Regular meetings and golf as usual, with the question box in vogue. Graham was President when the N.A.G.A. Convention was held in the Sherman Hotel in Chicago. This being the third Convention held in Chicago. This also was a very successful convention. John Darrah was the General Chairman and I believe the committees worked hard, which was evidenced by the success of their efforts. The Mid-West was highly complimented on it's success.

John Darrah was President for the year 1942. Up to John's administration, the Association was strictly a membership organization. During that year, associate members were admitted. Membership increased at once.

Ray Gerber was the next President and served during the years 1943-4. Membership continued to increase and interest continued. During Ray's reign, he worked with the C.D.G.A. in building two putting greens and a pitch and putt course for the veterans at Hines Hospital. . . . the boys at the hospital really enjoyed their Pee Wee Golf Course.

Ray Didier was the President during the years 1945-6. The question box had become regular routine at the meetings. The short course at Purdue had also developed into a yearly event and was well attended. The turf committee was very active and contributed much valuable information.

Don Strand was the next President elected for the years 1947-8. The association progressed greatly. Membership increased. Don was a very active President. The turf committee continued functioning and kept after the University of Illinois about an experimental garden. The committee also helped those who requested aid. The greenkeeper's calendar was a valuable contribution to the profession. Bob Williams was the author.

Mel Warnecke was the President for the year 1949. The fine work of the committees continued under Mel's leadership. Golf at the meetings was stressed and more men were playing golf, which is a great asset to themselves and their club. It is surprising what you see while playing golf that you do not see walking or riding over the golf course.

William Stupple was elected President for the years 1950-1. The 1950 National Convention was again held in Chicago at the Sherman Hotel. Bill was the General Chairman and the committees functioned well under his leadership. The most successful convention ever held was the result; the ladies will vouch for that, I am sure, so far as they were concerned. Bill is doing a fine job as President.

The meetings are well attended; instructive and educational. The turf garden so long fought for is near reality. The University of Illinois is eventually very much interested. The committees are active and producing excellent results.

Remarkable progress has been made in mowing equipment. Twenty-five years ago many were still using push type putting green mowers. It took a great deal of convincing to change to power those who were skeptical. However, today every golf course has been converted to the power putting green mower. It is fortunate, too, because it would be almost impossible to induce the present day workman to push a putting green mower. Fairway mowing equipment has been greatly improved so that fairways today almost without exception, have beautiful evenly cut turf. Rough mowing has become a simple operation today because of the development of mowers which enable one to mow rough more frequently and economically. When one looks back to the days when rough was cut with the sickle bar, and the raking together of the cut grass and hauling away of the grass, one can realize the advancement in mowing equipment.

When you look back and remember the types of sprayers that were in use years ago, one wonders how it was possible to accomplish what had to be done. Today it is a pleasure to operate the latest type sprayers because of the economy in time, material and labor, so we can truly say we have progressed.

The U.S.G.A. green section, and many universities have contributed enormously through research at the various experimental gardens and short courses, toward more economical maintenance. Chemicals have been developed for the control of weeds, brown patch, dollar spot and other fungi, earthworms, ants and other pests, fertilizer practices, better grasses for putting greens and fairways although location, climatic conditions play a very important part in the type of grass used.

All of these advancements have been brought about during the past 25 years.

The superintendent of today is a serious student of the profession. He is intelligent in his application of the information at hand. The next 25 years will see advances in maintenance methods just as revolutionary as we have seen during the past 25 years.

May the future of the Mid-West Superintendent's Association be a bright one.

PLEASE NOTE

The date of the Pro-Superintendents meeting at St. Andrews has been changed from Oct. 1 to Oct. 8.

MAINTAINANCE HINTS

The job of keeping the grass cut at the base of trees and under fences has long been a problem to golf course superintendents. Here at our club, the job required about eighty-five hours labor and a power trim mower. I have seen the job done using a scythe and then raking the cut grass and hauling it away, which would require at least twice as much labor and expense. When the grass has been trimmed, it is only a matter of three or four weeks and the whole job must be repeated. With the present labor costs being what they are, we are continually trying to reduce labor wherever possible. With the foregoing in mind it occurred to me that we would be much better off with no turf at all at the base of trees and the golfers would be better off, too, as they would prefer to hit a ball from bare ground as compared to hitting a shot from a clump of overgrown grass. We set out to accomplish the job of having bare ground at the base of our trees rather than turf that occasionally grew too high for either good golf or good groomed appearance. We started out with a three gallon Hudson sprayer filled with fuel oil and sprayed around all the trees in one area and waited and watched to see what the results would be. After a period of two weeks, we were so well satisfied with the looks of the job that we went ahead and treated every tree on the course. The time was about 24 hours labor and the material amounted to about thirty gallons. The spray covered about 14 to 18 inches out from the base of the tree. The average time for treating each tree is about 15 seconds. Some new growth started after three months and a second application has been made that will last the balance of the season.

I was afraid at first that there might be some damage to the trees but it seemingly has no effect on them. I checked this possibility with several tree experts and they agreed that no damage should occur as long as the material is kept away from the bark of the tree. Undoubtedly other materials would serve the same purpose. We picked fuel oil because we had a supply available, and its cost was very reasonable. An additional time and labor saving was effected by placing the sprayer on a caddy cart and wheeling it from tree to tree.

Bob Williams