

THE BULL SHEET, official publication of THE MIDWEST ASSOCIATION OF GOLF COURSE SUPERINTENDENTS.

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### PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

#### West of The Pecos—A Vacation

If we ask ten working or supervisory people to define their vacation we can expect at least ten different answers. This is natural. In a broad sense, it is a period of time for which we are responsible to no one in the business world that we know and live in today. Some save a bundle to try their luck at the track. Others visit relatives while still others are content to stay at home and paint the house. There are many examples. Your own is just another variation on how best to spend your vacation.

John Ebel summarized his vacation in this column last November in two words—Gone Hunting. We know Big John had lived through many 'green-keeping' headaches last summer, looking forward to the moment when he would take to the field, there to anticipate the first flush of the birds from their cornfield or meadow hiding place; to once again check his reflexes and to match wits and skills at night with his hunting companions in the telling of the whopper stories. All of this, of course, after he had let out his belt a couple of times at the dinner table. This, we will agree with John, was living—a real vacation.

As you might suspect, my vacation interests while just as basic, are found in an entirely different medium. As a youngster in school, Geography, History and Geology were my forte. My interest remains strong in these subjects today. About twenty years ago I added to this group of related subjects the hobby of photography. On the 15th of January the slogan of Horace Greeley resounded on my ears for the fourth time and my beloved and I set out for those enchanted areas—West of The Pecos.

Rolling along at 70 mph. a few interesting and sometimes sobering thoughts occur. The first one being that at this rate of speed you travel more miles on four wheels in one hour than your pioneer relatives did in four days. Then you look out above you and note the jet streams and feel that you are standing still while doing seventy. The other very obvious observation is that seldom do you roll through a town of any size without spotting a golf course. This is mute testimony of the game's popularity although some of the golf courses are not of the quality that we would care to call them 'home'.

In one town of about 5000 we stopped to photograph some sand greens on an old established course. Regardless, the game was being played enjoyed on this particular Saturday.

Those of us who are old enough to remember the depression days of the early thirties will also recall the great dust storms that were carried aloft and driven into the midwest by Nature's jet streams, having originated in the 'dust bowl' regions of our western states. I had occasion to experience dust storms in the making in West Central Texas on the 19th of January. They were featured in the headlines on the following morning in the various Texas papers. There will be many more soon unless Nature favors many of our states with abundant rainfall. Everywhere, the cry is "We need moisture." Our own state is no exception.

Had you and I been young European adventurers, disembarking from the first sailing ship to reach Plymouth Rock in 1620, proceeding post-haste overland to the area 'West of The Pecos', we would have missed by 350 years the greatest drouth this area or any other our USA has ever known. This 23 year drouth, of major proportions which ended in AD 1299, is an established fact—the dates having been determined by the Tree Ring method, proved and accepted by leading archaeologists in the country beyond a question of doubt. The Great Drouth had far reaching results on the lives of the First Americans who occupied what we know today as Colorado, Utah, New Mexico and Arizona. It was their ancestors who had migrated, via the Bering Strait, into North America, about the Time of Christ. We know the descendents of these migratory people today as the Navajo, the Hopi, the Apache and others. It was the Anasazi (Navajo for Ancient Ones), the ancestors of this present group, that built the fine 'cliff dwelling' houses we know today as Mesa Verde in Colorado, Montezuma Castle and White House Ruins in Arizona. Their one to five storied apartment houses had progressed to the point of using white plaster which is still in evidence today in the White House Ruins in Canyon de Chelly. Their great hunters had developed a new weapon, the bow and arrow, good for hunting but even greater in battle with their enemies. This bow and arrow soon replaced the ancient atlatl, long the favored weapon when their ancestors hunted the elephant on this continent.

Not all of the energy of these Cliff Dwellers was spent in building, hunting or fighting their enemies. I stopped at the Wupatki Ruins, near Sunset Crater in Arizona. During the excavation of a portion of these ancient apartment houses in the mid 30's and the surrounding area, a rubber ball was found buried deep in the rubble that covered an enclosed court nine feet in depth, 47 by 100 feet in area. The original center stones with square holes were intact. Many similar 'ball courts' have been excavated farther south into Mexico. It is reasoned that this game was a team effort affair and had some religious function in their lives.

If you ever have the occasion to visit one of these great ruins, do so. In these regions of desolation where total silence is often possible, linger a while. Let your mind roll backward into space of time for a thousand years. After all, this is but a fleeting moment. It's a great experience. The wilting grass of August and golf carts parked on the apron of your 9th green become quite insignificant.

Had our Big John Ebel been a great hunter in the year AD 1290 and resided in Apartment 1-13 on the first floor of Betatakin (Navajo for hillside house) at the head of Tsegi Canyon which I visited a day later, he would probably have hung a sign on the ladder which gave access through the roof into his 6x10 room meaning the same thing as last November—Gone Hunting. But this time the conditions would have been for different reasons. As the streams dried up and the rains did not come to fill even the desert pot holes, the game had migrated elsewhere or died. The seed of his corn, beans and squash hadn't germinated last spring. Times were indeed desperate. Long ago the domesticated turkeys and dogs had been killed for food. Yes, John had gone hunting—never to return to apartment 1-13 for he and the few remaining cliff dwellers were abandoning their homes because of the Great Drouth.

Warren Bidwell, President

Next Month: **A Look Behind The Turquoise Curtain**



**GENE CONWAY**

### **NEW COURSES IN THE CHICAGO AREA**

This is a continuation of a series of articles started last year about new courses that have recently been built in the Chicago area. This month we are describing the new and beautiful Signal Point Club in Niles, Michigan.

Signal Point is unique in its design and construction. It is a regulation 18 hole course with only nine greens. The architect was Robert Bruce Harris of Chicago. There are 18 tees of enormous size; two per green. The object is to play the first nine holes from one set of tees and then play the same nine holes from a different set of tees. This allows you to vary the length of the hole as well as varying the approach angle to many of the holes. As an example the second hole which is also the eleventh hole is 535 yards the first time you play it and the second time the yardage is 475 yards. The fifth hole and 14th hole is 420 yards the first time you play it but it becomes 335 yards the second time around. Total yardage for the 18 holes is 6295, Par 72.

The course is just south of Niles along the St. Joseph River. The terrain is rolling and the landscape is wooded. While visiting the course I had the honor of playing with Gene Conway, the General Manager. He was originally at the Elks Country Club in Ft. Wayne; Indiana before coming to Michigan. He is a member of our Profession and Association.

The Club has a very small limited membership. The Clubhouse is very rustic and beautiful. The operation is somewhat of a family affair. Mrs. Conway and her two sons also work at the Club. They work in all areas of the operation.

If you want to see a course where all the greens have been built to strict USGA specifications then you should visit Signal Point. The turf selected for the putting greens was C 15. The fairways are a mixture of several Bluegrasses and some fescues.

Gene is appearing on the USGA Program in Detroit, Michigan, on March 25, 1964 to discuss the construction and maintenance of these greens. This should be a must for any Superintendent contemplating the construction of such greens.

### **WOODRIDGE GOLF CLUB**

We at Woodridge felt the need of a change of location for our No. 6 Green on the Woodland Course. It was to the right of No. 7 Fairway about 30 feet and 100 yards from the No. 7 tee, and all too often a slice off the tee would put the ball on, over or near the No. 6 Green.

It was decided to place the new green up near the seventh tee. We drew up the plan for a six thousand square foot green with two sand traps. The length of the hole had to be sacrificed nine yards from 184 yards to 175 yards, but it was from a down hill shot to an up hill one now. We had to move a nursery of red and white pines 4½ to 5 feet in height, of which we made plantings in various places on the course.

We moved all Kentucky Blue Grass sod worth moving off the green site and later used it on the fairway. A D-7 Caterpillar was employed one day to push off and pile all top soil and then moved about 30 inches of the fairway hill to the green sites for rough grade. We then rented a ¾ yard bucket John Deere crawler to move back the top soil and shape traps and banks. The rest of the grading and leveling was done with our 800 Ford Tractor equipped with a half-yard bucket. We had to haul in 190 yards of top soil to get a 4 inch finish grade on the banks. Soil mixture for the green was made up of two parts top soil, one part humus and one part sand. Approximately 180 yards were mixed off-site and hauled in for the green area. Then 20 more yards were hauled in for the collar area, and 6250 lbs. of calcined clay was disked in the top six inches. A good fertilizer mixture, 200 lbs., including some urea-form nitrogen was rototilled in to a depth of four to five inches.

We cut C-15 bent from our nursery and bought 240 yards Merion Bluegrass for a six foot border around the green. The banks and fairway were sodded with Kentucky Bluegrass, from our grounds. We just finished hauling in and leveling twenty-one yards of No. 1 & 2 Torpedo sand and expect to top it with another 21 yards of No. 1 Torpedo for the upper two to three inches.