

## **Editorial**

**By Bob Breen**

**Superintendent, Arrow Head Golf Club**

The Homo sapien, or as he is usually referred to "man," has always, in his struggle to exist, been a creature of experiment and change.

In the forty odd years that I have been associated with the game of golf, I have observed the many changes that have affected those who depend on it for a livelihood, as well as those who seek to relax and commune with nature on the thousands of golf courses across the country. The most dramatic change that I recall was the development of 2.4.D.

The beginning of my life on a golf course came when in May of 1931 I began caddying at St. Andrews. The dandelions had just started to go to seed, and as I recall I lost about seven balls and discovered several adjectives that were used with much feeling by the gentlemen (?) I was caddying for. Not only did 2.4.D eliminate this problem for future caddies, but it also presented many superintendents with their first power sprayer and retired the MacLain barrel to the loft of the maintenance building. The sprayer is also used to apply the many chemicals that have replaced "Semesan" the most popular fungicide of the late 1940's. The new systemic and broad spectrum fungicide have given a control that would have been almost impossible in the early days of the profession of green keeping. Insecticides have also improved since D.D.T. was considered the ultimate in the years following WW II.

Changes in the equipment used to groom a golf course, while basically the same as in the late 40's, have become much more sophisticated. The tractor is now capable of pulling a 9 or 11 gang mower. The mowers have gone from a 5 or 7 blade reel to a 9 or more and in some cases are hydraulically driven.

I started cutting greens with a tri-plex mower, the "Worthington-Over-Green," but I do think that the riding tri-plexes of today to be an asset to those courses that have golfers at the crack of dawn not only on weekends but all through the week.

I recall aerating greens with a pitchfork and was very impressed with the turf aerator and its 8 drills that would do a 5000 foot green in 8 hours. Now with the Sub-Aire and others the job is simplified. The riding sand trap rake has made that chore somewhat less of a character builder than it used to be with a 24 or 36 inch trap rake.

Irrigation equipment has, with the introduction of P.V.C. pipe, become automated and in one instance in the Chicago area been computerized with TV cameras used to scan the course so as not to interfere with the golfers.

Controllers on the automatic system seldom get hung over, ask for a night off to go to a relative's wake or funeral, and can generally be relied upon to water exactly the area and time they are set for—and do not go back to school in the fall!

The many plant foods available to the superintendent can be had in almost any formulation desired with release of the nitrogen and other elements to the plant that is pre-planned.

The packaging of the fertilizer in 50 lb. bags is an improvement over the 100 lb. bags of years gone by.

Anyone who has made an inch or so skip on a green with a drop spreader really appreciates the modern broad cast spreader of today.

Not only the tools to work with, but also the grasses have improved as the agricultural and horticultural schools across the country develop new grasses to better withstand the onslaught of insects, disease, 90° weather and the compaction caused by both golfers and equipment.

I believe that it was around 1956 that the European Bark Beetle made its first appearance in the Chicago area and the change that it brought to many of the area golf courses cannot be considered an improvement, as literally thousands of Elms were diseased and subsequently removed as the disease ran unchecked. Even today, 18 years later, there is no cure that is one hundred per cent effective to all diseased Elms, although preventive spraying is very effective.

While the "ruddy" cheeked farm boy with inherent mechanical ability is still sought by most superintendents, the majority are now using Latin Americans as help continues to be a problem. There is little doubt that higher wages, hospitalization and a few other fringe benefits would greatly enhance the labor situation, but many of the clubs are lagging in taking a realistic approach to the problem.

The final change that I see is the change in the superintendent himself, from the "old timer" who had either a gardening or farming background and came into the field when the golf course builder left him behind to "look after things for awhile" when the course was completed.

I am thinking of people like Frank Dinelli, Bill Stupple, Ray Gerber, Amos Lapp, and the late John Macgregor and George Dalman, and many others whose dedication was so obvious.

The "new image" superintendent is typified by the Miles Brothers, Ed Fisher, John Jackman, Fred Opperman and Bruce Sering and others who have benefitted from the many colleges who offer courses in turf management.

There have been many changes not discussed—growth retardant, seed head inhibitors, pre-emergence chemicals, improved maintenance centers—but I have tried to relate the changes that have impressed me most in my forty years of association with golf.

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### **MEDINAH CLINIC PREVIEW**

This year the education committee is again pleased to announce a fine program for the annual MAGCS turf conference. Participating in the program are three past presidents of the G.C.S.A.A., Ray Gerber, Roy Nelson, and Bob Williams; Dr. Al Turgeon of the University of Illinois; Ted Woehrl, director of the G.C.S.A.A.; and many other superintendents from the Midwest Association.

Topics to be discussed range from the clubhouse area to problems with flooding. An extensive discussion on mechanical problems will be of great interest to all. With the current interest and activity in automatic irrigation, the conference will feature an entire session devoted to this subject.

Be sure to attend this excellent conference on November 13 and 14.