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**From Jim Bertoni  
La Jolla Country Club  
La Jolla California**

Now that I have stationed myself here in Southern California for over 3 years now, I guess I could be an authority of the differences between golf course management from the Midwest to the Southwest. The definition of an authority is "anyone who lives more than five miles away", and I qualify.

Although one would think that the agronomics of turf culture would be a stumbling block for a move from "cool season" to "warm season" or vice-versa, I have found this to be the least of my worries. We, as Superintendents, are professionals in the art of growing grass, regardless of variety or species. Bermuda grass is no more different than Bentgrass or than Bluegrass is. What I have tried to do is to understand the nature of the grasses that I have to work with, and design my programs accordingly. Soils out here are a great deal different than Chicago. In fact, what I have here at La Jolla C.C. for topsoil would not even be adequate for sub-soil at Knollwood. Out here, the soil is very heavy with an over abundance of rocks ranging in diameter from 2" to 2'. About 8-12" below this "topsoil" is a material called caliche - "a layer strongly cemented by secondary carbonates of calcium or magnesium precipitated from the soil solution. It may occur as: (1) a soft, thin soil horizon; (2) a hard thick bed just beneath the solum; (3) a surface layer exposed by erosion." Caliche at La Jolla C.C. falls into the categories 1 and 2 above. In some areas it is so thick, that it has taken 48 labor hours just to dig a hole for one tree! Many golf courses and landscape areas have found it necessary to use dynamite to penetrate caliche. The heavy, shallow soil creates numerous problems when determining the watering program during the night. Being as close to the Pacific Ocean as we are, 40% of our days are overcast. Thus, if we irrigate to allow for a sunny condition and it does not exist the following day, we are extremely wet (the water has no place to go, it is held at the surface as the caliche will not allow it to penetrate it's strata). If on the other hand we irrigate expecting an overcast day and it is sunny, we are bone

dry and the grass is subject to stress (the thin topsoil layer dries very quickly above the caliche). Since weather conditions normally move from West to East, predictions are very inaccurate at best as the ocean is to our west and it is difficult to predict weather over the vast area accurately.

The major problems I encountered were membership confidence. They felt, at first, that an individual from another area of the country could not acclimate himself to the different turfgrasses to sufficiently do the job. After those first few months, however, they began to accept my "radical" programs, and now 3 years later, they swear by these same programs that they once criticized. As an example, never before has anyone syringed the greens during the day, especially when the sun was out. The belief of the membership was that this program would "burn" the greens. Since they used to average a loss of 3-5 greens per year before my arrival, and haven't lost one since my arrival, they firmly support this management. No one has ever left the aerifying hole "open" until my arrival, thinking the sun would bake the soil and kill the grass, topdressing was always very heavy and infrequent, and no one ever wasted time by cutting fairways in a cross direction. These programs, originally criticized are now well received. The first 6 months were almost unbearable, but the last 2½ years have been the most secure of my life.

Like every other Golf Course Superintendent, I also have people problems. Mine, however, are just a little bit different than yours. Basically, our membership is comprised of many very wealthy retired people who have decided to finish out their lives in the most beautiful climate in the world — La Jolla, California. Their desire is for a fun, simple game of golf. The remaining 40%, however, are young aggressive management people who desire a tough, demanding challenging game of golf. They are also influenced by our touring professional members who grew up on this golf course, and actually learned the game here at La Jolla Country Club. They include Chuck Courtney (winner of 3 tournaments in the 1960's), John Schroeder (won the PGA match play tournament), Craig Staddler (1974 National Amateur Champion, just turned professional), and the last two, who need no explanation — Paul Runyon and Gene Littler. These men spend all their time away from the tour here at La Jolla C.C. When they arrive here, they expect the course to be in the same condition as the course they just played in Chicago, New York or any other course they have just returned from on the tour. Of course, these courses have prepared and directed all efforts to that one week they were there for years in advance. They cannot understand that no course can take that management for an extended period of time. If we could, then the 60% retired people would scream "bloody murder". Oh, there is never a dull moment here at La Jolla.

There are many things I miss about Chicago, but then, California has something to combat it. I miss the winters with their white fluffy snow, but I don't miss the slush, the slippery highways, the cold mornings scraping ice off the windshield and warming up the car. I miss the leisurely winters, but I don't miss the 20 hour days of the summer. With my year 'round 13 man crew, all are professionals in their daily tasks, I am truly an 8 hour a day manager. I miss the beauty of spring and the wonders nature performs, but I don't miss the mosquitoes, training a completely new crew or the battle with the members who want to play golf



during thaw conditions. I miss the welcomed summer rains, (it never rains here from February until December - no kidding!) but I don't miss the downpours that create erosion of sand traps, and other areas, nor trying to tell the membership that they can't play **their** course. I miss the fresh sunny, lazy days of July and August, but I don't miss not being able to enjoy them as I prepare the sprayer for preventative Pythium spray, sleeping with the night watchman to make sure they aren't sleeping, and I enjoy spending these summer afternoons with my wife and children. I miss the beauty of autumn, the trees turning their magnificent colors, but I don't miss blowing out the irrigation system, and then not being able to sleep all winter because that one valve on the 16th fairway wouldn't cooperate, and I wonder if its going to "pop" during the winter. I don't miss telling the members that we have frost and they have to wait until its gone. But most importantly, I do miss all my friends, and Superintendent associates, but...there is nothing in California that can ever balance the scale on that.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Jim Bertoni was a former Golf Course Supt. in the Chicago area. The following article was mailed to the Verdure. That is where the credit goes. I imagine Jim could not trust himself to spell the word **Bull Sheet**.



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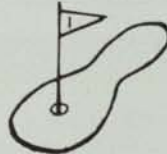
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### LETTER TO JOE GRENKO

Dear Joe,

Thank you so much for honoring me again with membership in MAGCS. I appreciate this more than I can say and always enjoy working with the Superintendents.

Sincerely yours,

**Carol McCue**  
Chicago District Golf Association