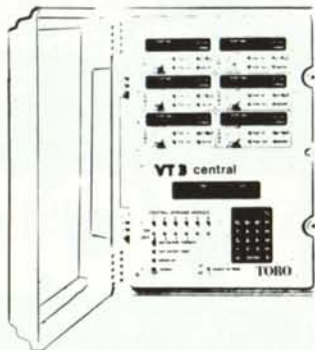


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#### A REVIEW OF THE PAST — BY THE EDITOR HOW GOLF COURSE MAINTENANCE WORK WAS IN THE LATE TEENS

Several things come to my mind. One of the things is, what were the cost of many items several years ago? One could buy a model T Ford car for approximately three hundred dollars. A spare tire was not included. Usually the dealer would give the customer a spare tire and also a set of tire chains. The chains were very necessary for anyone who expected to travel in the country. One could buy gasoline for ten or eleven cents a gallon. No tax those days. Farm labor was thirty dollars per month included board and room. One could buy a pair of work shoes for less than two and a half dollars. There was a shoe store in Minneapolis called the ninety-eight cent shoe store, none higher. There was a time when one could go to Sears Roebuck and buy a hand lawn mower for less than two dollars and fifty cents.

What about various costs on golf courses? I can only go back to 1916, the year I started to work on one. Wages were considered satisfactory at that time — twenty cents per hour, ten hours per day, six days a week, and no coffee breaks. Board and room was one dollar a day. This included all the food one could eat. One could hire a team of horses and a driver for five dollars a day. Help was plentiful in those years and it was good dependable help.

Very little commercial fertilizer was purchased in the teen years. The fertilizer used came from the horse or cattle barns. How many of you ever used real liquid fertilizer? I imagine very few of you know of the method that is required in the processing of this kind of fertilizer. My experience came at the club I was employed at in Minnesota. A large pit was built. The pit was then filled with manure from the stables. Water was poured over it occasionally. After several days the liquid was pumped from the bottom of the pit and put in large containers and taken out on the golf course greens and applied, usually with a sprinkling can. It was almost impossible to get an even distribution, but we always were able to tell if the fertilizer was any good. This is some contrast in regards to applying fertilizer on greens today. But labor was cheap. The material cost nothing.

Red top grass seed was five cents a pound, Kentucky Blue - eight cents a pound.

Prior to the middle 1920's the soil that was used in golf course construction or that was necessary to use in the maintenance of a golf course was moved either by horses and scrapers, or wagons or wheelbarrows. How did the soil get into the wagons? By men and shovels. When making application for a job of this nature the only qualification required was good legs, and a strong back.

In the early years the grass on the greens consisted mostly of Fescue, German mixed bents, clover and weeds. Weeds were either left there or removed by hand digging. I often wondered which was worse - the weeds or the weeders. Greens were mowed about three times a week with a wheel type mower. It took a man around five hours to mow three greens. Watering was usually done when greens began to turn brown from the lack of moisture, not with the idea in mind to help hold a pitched ball, but to keep the grass alive when cut at, the then called, short height of one-half inch. Worm casts were usually so thick in the spring and fall that the greens had the appearance of a green that had just been topdressed - before the top dressing had been worked in. It was always necessary to pole a green with a bamboo pole before mowing. I remember on one green we used a chemical for worm control; when the



worms came to the surface, we raked them up and hauled them away in a wheelbarrow; and the wheelbarrow was almost full. Statements of this kind are hard for some of you to believe, but I know it is the truth, because I was one of the fellows at the end of the rake handle.

Greens were fertilized usually with ammonium sulphate which was applied with a barrel type sprayer. It consisted of a fifty gallon barrel with two large steel wheels, one on each side, and a handle attached to the front. A one inch pipe about four feet long with several holes drilled into the pipe attached to the back end acted as a spray-boom. A shut-off valve was installed between the pipe and the barrel. Two men pulled the barrel and one walked along the side using a paddle to keep the solution agitated. You can imagine the damage that was done to the putting surface by the barrow wheels and the men's shoes pulling this heavy barrel up the contours. How does this compare to the present day of applying liquid fertilizer to turf? Now a six thousand square foot green requires approximately seven minutes to apply the fertilizer.

There was practically no chemical for disease control in the teen years. Today there is a chemical for the control of almost any disease; in fact, maybe every one and it can be applied to the average green in three to four minutes.

It used to take one and a half hours to mow a green with a wheel type mower. When a roller type mower was manufactured, mowing time was reduced considerably. Then the power mower came on the market; first a single unit, then a two and three unit mower was used. This looked like we had it made. Now we have a three unit power riding mower which requires approximately ten minutes to cut an average green.

Fairways in the early years consisted of native grass and weeds. Fertilizing was almost unheard of with the exception of a little barnyard manure used on certain areas. The mowing was done with horses - one cutting unit for each horse. The next improvement was one horse to three cutting units. As time went on we used two horses and five cutting units. And remember, we always had to put leather boots on the horses' feet before we could go on the fairway and start mowing. Fairways were cut at 1½ inches. You can imagine the height of the grass during the fast growing season between mowings because it took many days to get over the whole course. It was not unusual to lose a ball in a fairway. As years went by the manufacturers came out with a tractor to either pull or push five mowers. This replaced the horses that were used for that purpose. The result of this improvement meant the fairways could be mowed twice a week!

When the depression came along, the manufacturers built a tractor with greater speed and more power. We then used seven or nine units instead of five, and were able to mow all the fairways in about six hours or less. The increased speed that was required to mow them in this length of time soon showed faulty results, fairways began to get like a washboard. I am sure that many of you have noticed the damage done by high speed mowing and had to correct the damage of cross mowing.

Some of you will remember the weed problem on fairways - dandelions, plantain, buck-horn, and many other weeds. In many cases there were more weeds than grass. In the spring when dandelions were blooming and were in their seeding stage, it was almost impossible to find a golf ball. But thanks to the great research work accomplished by some of our chemical companies, today weeds and clover on fairways and in the rough are very rare. A few years back it required

about two days to fertilize an eighteen hole golf course. Today, it can be done in five hours or less. This shows a tremendous progress in fairway maintenance.

**Tees** - Up until the latter years tees were built far too small. There was just enough room for a foursome and three caddies, the fourth one was usually down the fairway watching where the balls went. No care was given to them during the year except an occasional mowing. When the grass was all worn away, the tee was resodded. Today, the secret of good tees is large tees. Most tees that are being built today are around six to eight thousand square feet and maintained almost like greens with the exception of the cutting height. Divots are filled with seed and soil or plugged and watered regularly.

**Rough** - I would like, at this time, to say a few words about the rough which I think most of us get into occasionally when playing golf. I wonder how many of you know when roughs were really rough.

All of the rough was cut with a sickle type farm hay mower at the course I was at in 1916-19. With the exception of about twenty feet next to the fairway, the rest of it was mowed twice a year, and the hay was used to feed our horses. When a ball got into this kind of rough, it was usually give up as a lost ball. Sometimes the player and his caddy would look for it on their hands and knees, or by rolling over and over, but it was usually useless. Today one can hardly call it rough. It is cut too short, and too often.

Many times I think of the advancement there has been in the past 65 years. Greens mowed at one-half inches three times a week. Today they are like a carpet mowed at 3/16" or less, free from weeds, the finest strains of grass that can be grown in your particular area and mowed six or seven times a week during the growing season.

Fairways are better than the greens used to be. Tees are in a condition that any turf-loving person should hate to take a divot from.

Many wood clubs are used in the rough today. In the old days this sort of thing was seldom heard of. In the teens and twenties the banks of the greens and tees and the fairway bunkers were cut with a scythe. The men mowing with the scythe usually did no other work during the season. They used to wear the wood on the scythe handles with their fingers down to the rod running through the handle. How many men are there today that know how to use a scythe?

Years ago it used to require five nights to irrigate the tees, greens and fairways on an eighteen hole golf course. Today the modern automatic system will do the job in one night. The old systems were lucky to have thirty five to forty lbs. of pressure. Today they operate with one hundred and thirty or more lbs.

Golf course maintenance is at a higher standard today than ever in the history of golf, but there are some players who still complain about the condition of the course. Sometimes I wonder if they come out to enjoy a game of golf, or just look for something to criticize. I am sure if they kept their minds more on their game, there would be lower scores.

Ray Gerber

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## A HEAVY LOAD

One person who carries other peoples' problems on his shoulders is the caddie.

— Homer Phillips