

MAGCS Directors Column

What's in Store for '84

by Julius Albaugh, Supt.

Westmoreland Country Club

Recently, while reviewing weather data from the Spring of 1983, I ran across some not so welcome similarities. Another cold, miserable spring; if one can call it spring at all. We have had but one different twist, which occurred on April 29th and 30th with 24 hours of 45 to 60 mile per hour winds - which resulted in a repeat of our just finished spring clean up. What a wonderful way to start a season, another two weeks behind schedule. Sometimes we forget, often we are all in the same boat. What bothers me is are we headed for a repeat of 1983?

In this modern world of today, with our advanced technology in weather forecasting and all, many of the old sayings or predictions on forecasting weather have been lost. After all, they have no scientific backing. But, is it only because of coincidence that makes some of them come true? Let us review some I have heard recently.

A late Easter, a late Spring. This year has certainly verified that statement. Hopefully, the late Easter is the reason for our cold spring. I would like to hope the similarity thus far to 1983 stops there.

When the **Poa annua** seed production is unusually heavy, look out for an unusually hot summer? I first heard this one last June; it had come from an "oldtimer" in our Golf Course Superintendent's ranks. We had just had a bumper crop of **Poa annua** seed, but yet my feeling at the time was, "How could a **Poa** plant know anything?" To me the Summer of '83 placed some merit to that tale. We should look to see what the 1984 **Poa annua** seed crop is trying to tell us.

Hot summers run in three year cycles. I've heard this one from several sources lately. The sources point to our last real hot spell, the mid-1950's, three record breaking heat and drought years in a row. This one concerns me; I've heard it from several sources, non-related. It makes me wonder, could it happen again? If it happens again, would we be better prepared than last year?

In some ways it is doubtful if we are better prepared than last year. As we look at the problem areas of 1983, especially those that were renovated after mid-September, we still see a potential problem. In many cases the turf is still thin, and recovery is not to the point we would like to see. The traffic areas that suffered last year to turfgrass wear and compaction still have not recovered. In fact, the early season traffic is starting many of these areas on a downhill slide in early May. By contract, the problem areas of 1983 that were renovated prior to September 15th show new vigor, are well healed, and have an excellent stand of desirable turf. Early renovation seems to have been the key. We must take advantage of the warm soil and early fall growing conditions for better seedling establishment.

Over all, we have learned by the experience of 1983. A repeat, although dreadful, will be handled differently. Many have been able to increase their budgets to provide more labor and materials to combat the extremes. Several have improved irrigation systems by renozzling to correct problems that developed last year due to uneven coverage. Others have been

successful in acquiring new equipment to change their fairway mowing techniques. One of the factors that stood out in 1983 was the use of lighter equipment and clipping removal on fairway turf. We have used the experience of an extreme year to our advantage.

As for forecasting the future weather conditions, it remains to be anyone's guess. The old predictions observed from nature or past experiences sometimes are more accurate than the modern day scientific 5, 10, 30 or 90 day forecast. They are interesting to note and follow at times and to be compared to today's satellite forecasting. But regardless of whether we know what the future holds in store, we must take our weather conditions as they develop; it is one thing over which we have no control. We can only continue to learn and improve our maintenance techniques to better cope with what nature deals us. So don't sell the farm yet, the old predictions have no scientific backing. Just take note of the 1984 **Poa annua** seed crop.

A Letter From "Herb Graffis"

Dear Roger,

You and your teammates have really thrilled the lead out of my dead fanny and put spring in my heart with the Honorary Membership.

My warmest gratitude to you all. And to think that my brother Joe and I were in when the Midwest was being born and had the honor and worry of participating in the work of the Midwest fellows who were modest, even virtually anonymous pioneers in the immense and comprehension of fine turf development that eventually qualified all of us in the game's Green Section to make the boast no other sport can make "Golf Keeps America Beautiful."

No other working group in sports has contributed nearly as much to the environmental, social, and economic national progress as the fellows in charge of golf courses and the collaborators in their work. And for you all to remind me that Joe and I have been members of your team when you were starting really thrills the hell out of me and at my time of life, I rarely am thrilled.

I can remember playing golf at Riverside with that most amusing of all sports writers, Ring Lardner. I think Bob Lessley, a pioneer in bent grass nursery business around Chicago, also was a member there as were other fond pals of mine.

I continue to be very much interested in the "Bull Sheet". It maintains the high and helpful standard Ray Gerber set. As my sight is bad I have the "Bull Sheet" read to me. It gives me a bright close-up on what's going on. That story of the superintendent telling of his pride in a fine small course and sharing the headaches and joys of stretching the budget with the greenchairman of the great sort, a club is lucky to get.

I miss the older members and I'm mighty proud to have known them and saw them make courses in the Chicago area so beautiful. The old boys who were at Sunset Ridge, Glen Oak, Knollwood are gone but their successors continue to make America beautiful and the golfers happy and first rate.

Again my thanks to you all.

Herb Graffis