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Activity After Retirement

by Warren Bidwell

While attending the Turf Field Day at the University of Illinois recently, I happened upon our most Honorable Editor of the Bullsheet at the lunch table — where else!

Between gulps and bites we began the usual conversation on the season of '83 vs '84; how his ulcers were doing better this year and the children recognize him when he sits down to dinner.

Suddenly the conversation turned serious. Am I coping with this inevitable thing known as retirement? Am I able to keep out of my wife's hair? Does the vacuum cleaner noise get on my nerves? Boy, I thought, I should have sat at another table. All of this and turfgrass too?

Then the questions drifted into my life style pattern. More questions, though! Have I been doing any traveling? Are any more overseas trips planned for this year? Being the gentleman that I am sometimes, I began to fill Fred in on a few visits to GCSAA chapters when suddenly he interrupted me. This is not like Fred, you know. "Tell you what, why don't you put this on paper and we will publish it in the Bull Sheet." A trap, if I ever fell into one. Not to be outdone, I responded like the pretty lady on the telephone. "If you aren't careful, Fred, I'll give you thirty minutes on the subject." "Put it on paper and send it to me right away, I need it for the next issue." So, friends and neighbors, don't blame me, see Fred, and he will know better next time.

By prior arrangements with my seed importer friend in South Africa, I arrived in Johannesburg last July 22nd. Pye Bredenkamp is Green Chairman of the Rand Park Club, came to the Vegas conference and played in the GCSAA Tournament in Phoenix with my former assistant, Dave Kroll, of Wilmington C.C. in Delaware.

Unfortunately, nature has a few surprises for us at times, for three days later I found myself in the hospital for a ten day stay for a gentlemen's operation that threw our well organized plans right out the window.

Our initial intent for the first two weeks was to present a two week seminar, with yours truly as the lead off man, other specialists to follow. Now, everything had to be reorganized to re-begin in two weeks. All went well with attendees from all over the country, many of whom I had met on previous trips. With no turf schools or turf experiment stations in the entire country, these chaps are hungry for knowledge, particularly where many of them are now converting their greens of Bermuda to our American grasses, a mixture of Penncross, Pennfine Rye, Dawson's Fine Leaf Fescue and Poa Trivialis. It's a new world for them! Diseases that they have not found necessary to cope with before harbors in the remains of the heavily dethatched Bermuda during their cool, and sometimes damp winter months of July, August and September. When asked how they apply their fungicides, the reply will often be that they use their Knapsack sprayers. Needless to say, the results are awesome.

In spite of their many shortcomings, the golfers love the new concept of overseeding with our grasses. Now they have green grass all year, where previously they played on brown turf for five months because of the surface frosts that stopped growth. Many managers told me that they now have as much golf during their winter (seldom below 30 degrees F) as in summer.

Arriving home on Labor Day, I brought along pictures of suc-
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(Retirement cont'd.)

cess, pictures of outright failures due to ignorance and pictures of indifference. You see, for fifty years their greenkeepers had literally nothing to do; the Bermuda was brown - no growth. Beyond the realm of ignorance lies the age-old story of construction. Red, hard clay has been their basic material for greens construction. USGA Specs was introduced by Trent Jones just ten years ago. All of the clubs sat back awaiting the outcome of this new concept of greens building that was going in at the Killarney club. The old timers don't give up their old ideas easily, but now the changes are being accepted, including the acceptances of American grasses.

In mid-September I participated in the Northwest Turf Conference under the direction of Dr. Roy Goss of Washington State. The meeting was held east of the Cascades on the American Indian Resort Course, Kah-ne-Tah Warm Springs. It seems that our Uncle Sam bought some of their rich timber lands near Mt. Hood. At the urging of their legal consul, they built the hotel and golf course as an income investment entity for the future. In this dry land portion of Oregon, water rights are more important than timber. The natural warm springs provides this in abundance, adequate for swimming pools and golf course irrigation, plus pasture lands for the stable of riding horses.

Dr. Bill Meyer, (son of our own Tony of Woodridge) was on the program also. Dr. Bill is leaving his mark in the seed industry, having to his credit tall and fine leaf fescues and some blue grasses. Breeding of foliage crops is also under way at this extensive experimental plots known as Turf Seeds, Inc.

While at the headquarters of Penncross in Hubbard, I became fully aware of the damaging 7½ inches of rain that devastated the bentgrass harvesting in late July of '83. Returning from South Africa, I had brought back an order for fifteen tons of Penncross. No way. It just could not happen. Not in '83. While it was new business, the quota system had to apply to them also.

Dr. Kem Scheffer, Turf Extension, Auburn University of Alabama, had asked me to give my slideshow at their turf conference in early October — two subjects: overseeding Bermuda and, as banquet speaker, a slide show on my recent trip to S.A. The experimental plots at Auburn cover a multitude of Southern Turfgrasses under study. At the close of the conference, Dr. Scheffer drove me to see the Shoal Creek Club, in Birmingham, where the PGA Championship will be played in August. With a forest setting, 328 Bermuda fairways and Penncross greens, it will be a 'first' for a major championship for the state. The US Open will follow in '86.

In mid October, I traveled to Madison, Georgia to install experimental seed plots on the estate of the Pennington family, owners of the Pennington Seed Company. They supply lawn and farm seeds to eight southern states. In true southern hospitality, I was invited for lunch in their beautiful, southern style home. Excellent cornbread and good southern greens were only a small part of the table offering. Inquiring of my own background, I related to my days as a farm lad, plowing with a team of mules at age eleven and helping to cut the tobacco crop after school hours in Kentucky. "You sound like a Georgia boy" was the response. As a token of goodwill, the very charming Mrs. Pennington provided me with a quantity of shelled pecans to bring home to my Catherine. How nice!

Early in November I drove to Little Rock, Arkansas to give
(cont'd. page 18)

(Retirement cont'd.)

two talks at the Southern Turfgrass Turf Conference, a newly formed, eleven state organization. This is still an area of transition. Where greens construction of a few years ago is adequate, they are going Penncross, yet a lot of Bermuda exists in Arkansas. Just a few short years ago, Bobby McGee moved from the Athletic Club of Atlanta to the C.C. of Little Rock. He soon converted from Bermuda to Bent for his greens. Others have followed.

With the Turf Conference at Penn State scheduled for early in December, I headed out five days in advance for scheduled stops at Congressional to see the new bent, Penn State 126, under trial by Super Bill Black on his extensive nursery. It looked excellent. You will be hearing more of this variety by Dr. Duich come '85 when a limited number of pounds will make an entry into the market place. It has everything that we like about Penneagle and Penncross, plus a more upright growth habit. Like the others, it has been tested all over the world during the last few years.

Our established test seed plots in Maryland were evaluated by Bill Black and myself on a sod farm near Baltimore before I moved on for a two day visit with Dave Kroll in Delaware at his Wilmington. In addition to thirty-six holes, Dave sports his Penncross tennis courts where the State championships are played each year.

Christmas was spent in California after a five day trip across the country, sometimes with old man winter on our heels. Our twenty-six foot Tioga Motor home was as comfortable as could be. Twenty-four hours after driving through Dallas, they had their first six inch snowfall of the season.

An invitation by our mutual friend, Dr. Jack Butler at Colorado State was almost like 'old home' week. In addition to Jack, Colorado was full of Penn Staters, all very much alive and doing well.

This time I was doing double duty again, giving a talk on Tees. I did my homework by walking the four Del Monte courses while spending a few days with my son in Pebble Beach. I needed the exercise and the ocean setting for these courses always inspires me. Camera in hand, I had a ball. For kicks, I walked twelve miles of the famous Seventeen Mile Drive one day. Only thing was, I shelled out \$12.50 for lunch at Del Monte Lodge. Anyway, the pie with ice cream was good. Ja?

Vegas was the best ever. Maybe I feel that way because so many of my peers dwelt me a complete surprise in bestowing the D.S. Award upon me. I almost choked up that morning. You Mid-West Supers must have written a lot of letters to pull that one off. Many Thanks.

Four of my South African friends played in the tournament, later the conference; a first for them and a real eye opener. Some are planning to be in D.C. in February. A recent letter from Ray Keane in Australia indicates their intention to attend the Frisco conference.

Arriving home on March 5th, we asked ourselves, what was the hurry? Never again! But, I had to prepare for a busy month. For the last twelve years I have been on the educational staff for the Club Managers Association. My role is to provide their guys and gals with our problems of agronomy, the changing scene within the pesticide industry — why the costs are so high and, most of all, why the equipment requirements are such a big chunk of our maintenance budget. Again, this year, I par-

(cont'd. page 20)

"Bit-by-Ching"

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It drains the Green, speeds up the play.
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anticipated at their regional seminar in Pittsburg. This is an hour and one half event. I have never had an occasion to question their respect for our guys.

While in Pittsburg I spent some time with Joe Baidy, President of the newly founded GCSAA chapter in greater Pittsburg. Joe was a part of our summer crew while a student at Penn State during my first time around at Olympia. We drove to Cleveland for the USGA Seminar and stopped in for a lengthy visit with Paul Latshaw of Oakmont fame. Prior to the '83 open, they did a complete re-seeding of Oakmont, using Penneagle. Unfortunately, immediately prior to the beginning of the Open, a new fungicide discolored the greens and the TV showing was not to his liking.

My next stop with President Baidy was at his brothers course in Morgantown, West Virginia where Sheraton has a hotel/golf and tennis resort. Dr. Jack Harper and a few others from State College area were in attendance. The S. A. Turf Scene kept their interest for about forty minutes.

Terry Buchen, a Penn Stater, now in Denver, is supervising the construction of Glenmoor Country Club there and very active in the local chapter. At his request, I accepted the invitation of the Colorado GCSAA to meet in Grand Junction and present my slide show on, "Floral Displays for Your Club". This was pretty close to the same talk given in Atlanta during our first time around in Georgia. A lot of Chicago clubs were on exhibit in Grand Junction that day.

With six courses under construction in Denver, I had the occasion to see some of Pete Dye's work going on. One course is for the county just north of Denver, being built on the flood plain of the South Platte River, an all gravel/sand complex. Even though the design and building is intended for public fee use, it will have championship characteristics that will challenge the best sharp shooters.

The month of June meeting with the Michigan and Border Cities GCSAA brought me one of my most recent challenges in preparing the subject they desired, "Retirement". Martin Miller had looked me up on the floor in Vegas with this request. I did my homework on a rather broad scale, sought out some handouts that were pertinent to the subject, then injected some personal experiences that seemingly, were acceptable and did my thing. Not too bad — I hope.

While in Detroit, my interest in tri-plex mowing of fairways took me to visit with Clem Wolfrom at Detroit Golf Club. From there to see Chicago's own Ted Woehrle. This concept will never allow clubs to return to the old days of the big, heavy monsters dragging seven units all over the place. The accomplishments; the quality of cut, makes a "pool table" like cut, something that all golfers like and will never give up. The benefits are there also for the bentgrass and the superintendent. Fortunately, our guys thought about this thing, tried it to test the idea and the economics, and it has taken off. Everyone benefits. We sell more seed to be introduced into a mixed Poa and bent population fairway and the Supers who got this thing off the ground look better every year.

Did you see Butler during the Western? Magnificent, wasn't it? Penneagle Bent at it's best!

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