

MAGCS Directors Column

It's a Funny Business

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When you think about it, golf course management can be one of the most perplexing occupations. Don't you just have to chuckle at what has taken place in the past, is taking place now, and probably will take place in the future in our business? I would like to relate to you some of the things that seem to be questions that perpetually go unanswered, are answered with befuddlement and incomplete thought, or as you will probably concur, have no reasonable answer.

Some of the controversies involving equipment can be most tedious. What's better, the riding greensmower or the walking greensmower, or is it just a question of the width of the stripes? Are gang fairway mowers really that much better than the triplex or are we really trying to set us up for the development of the fairway stumpmeter, or is it stampmeter? Are drum aerators really as good as camshaft aerators on fairways or do we feel sorry for our crew who has the death march each Spring? Need I go on?

What about fertilizers? Should you use slow release, fast release, middle of the road release? Should you use sprayable, granular, blended, coated, homogenized, folded, spindled, or mutilated? Does shallow, frequent irrigation really prolong the existence of *Poa Annua* or does it just set it up like tin cans on a fence for the first blast of hot air out of the gun of summer? Is it really true that green and lush is better than lean and mean? Can you really drill seed creeping bentgrass into *Poa Annua* and expect results?

Is it true that some fungicides really last three weeks or is it just that we never have three weeks in a row of weather conducive to disease development? Can you really expect to see no crabgrass if you apply a herbicide when some bush flowers in the Spring?

Do Superintendents really have to work seven days a week from April through October or do we really have an aversion to taking summer vacations, fishing trips, or long weekends with our wives? Do your wife and kids really believe you when you tell them that you have to "babysit" your irrigation system or do they just think you have this rather strange attachment to sleeping in pumphouses? Does your Green Chairman really know what every other superintendent in the area is doing or is he really just trying to figure out what you are doing?

What about your help? Is it true one good Amigo is worth two Gringos on any given day or is it just the mystique of the language difference? Does that mechanic really mean he can rebuild that rotary mower engine or does he just want to find out what is under that shroud? Aren't you glad he is not doing it to that new diesel tractor? Did that laborer really think that yellow line around the pond was where you wanted him to stop mowing or is he a golf course architect incognito who likes the natural look?

Sometimes I wish I had one good solid answer for each of those questions. But then I come back to reality and realize that these are what keep my job challenging. What really scares me is that if I had all the answers I might have been destined to become a General Manager!

NGF-GCSAA Study: \$1.7 Billion Spent Annually on Golf Course Maintenance

NORTH PALM BEACH, FLA. — U.S. golf courses spend \$1.7 billion a year to maintain their facilities, according to a joint study conducted by the National Golf Foundation and the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America.

The study, called "The Golf Course Maintenance Report," is based on a national survey of golf courses conducted in the fall of 1984. Over 2,300 courses responded to the survey, the largest of its kind ever conducted.

According to the study, \$137 million is expended each year for new maintenance equipment and \$103 million is spent on projects to improve existing facilities. The remainder, almost \$1.5 billion, represents yearly maintenance operating costs.

"Personnel costs constitute the largest single expense category for maintaining the nation's golf courses," stated Jim Prusa, associate executive director of the GCSAA. "On the average, 60 to 70 percent of a golf course maintenance budget is for personnel costs, including salaries and wages, payroll taxes and employee benefits. The maintenance industry is a people industry."

Another statistic uncovered by the study is that the nation's golf courses currently have a maintenance equipment inventory valued at over \$1.8 billion. "It takes a lot of equipment to maintain a golf course," Prusa explained. "Every course needs tractors, trucks, mowers, irrigation equipment, tools and implements ... and the list goes on and on."

One of the reasons that the NGF and the GCSAA conducted this study was to try and identify maintenance costs and practices, a somewhat neglected, but very important part of the golf industry. "There has been a tremendous void in the amount of quality information available to golf course superintendents and managers," NGF President David B. Hueber said. "The NGF and GCSAA recognized this problem and we plan to replicate the study every two or three years to keep the industry up to date on the changing nature of their business."

Copies of "The Golf Course Maintenance Report" can be obtained from the NGF office. Cost is \$30 for NGF sponsor members and \$40 for non-members.



"Remember"

What happened to the Bull on the Bull Sheet?

Like the Chicago Stock Yards He's gone.

When the tune of the times cast It's shadow,

Seems it's best to sing a new song.

But I liked that Old Bull on the Bull Sheet,

He showed strength, stature and Class.

I'll remember that Bull on the Bull Sheet,

And remember His part in the past.

Kenneth R. Zanzig