

Director's Column

The "Off-Season"

by Don Cross

Superintendent Skokie C.C.

First of all I would like to thank all of you, whom attended and voted at the annual meeting, for electing me as Secretary-Treasurer of our association. It is an honor to be an officer of such a fine group and I will work hard to earn the trust you have given me.

As I write this, it's New Years Day and I want to wish all of you and your families the very best in 1994. You may be wondering why I'm spending New Years Day, more than a month prior to you receiving this **Bull Sheet** issue, to write this column. Well, I'll get to it later but I first want to discuss our so-called "Off-Season". You know, most of you have been asked, "What do you do in the Off-Season"?

The word itself implies we have the entire time off. Well, we all know this is the farthest from the truth and we should all communicate to others, that much work still continues in this "Off-Season". It may seem like we have an abundance of time on our hands, but perhaps it is due to our work week dropping from seven to five days and our hours resembling more the norm of forty instead of sixty plus!



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It seems as though our weather (at least for the past several years) has been mild enough such that work can continue on the golf course well into December and then we are back out again in early March. About two and a half months of "Off-Season". Plenty of time, most would claim, to get equipment in top shape for next season and still have some free "Off" time. Well, let's analyze this a little more closely.

Most of us have snow removal responsibilities, and you may have paddle courts which must be kept free of snow and the heaters and lights maintained at all times. Many of you may perform, or contract, tree pruning during this time and with this comes branch hauling and/or chipping tasks. Transporting sand to bunkers or soil and/or other materials for construction projects and planting trees in pre-mulched locations are other activities performed. Pumphouse equipment maintenance, shop cleaning and organizing, and of course rebuilding, re-painting, and re-furbishing numerous pieces of equipment are our main tasks at hand.

Personally, as managers, we spend this "Off-Season" writing reports to green committees, writing articles for club newsletters, planning maintenance and improvement programs, performing inventories, making purchases and catching up on reading trade journals and other publications.

Attending educational events such as the NCTE, the Midwest Turf Expo, the Mid-AM show, GCSAA Regional seminars, and the GCSAA International Conference and Show, are other activities which require much time devotion during this "Off-Season".

One of the most important activities we should do, because we may not get the chance at any other time of the year, is to take time to "recharge the batteries". Which brings me back to why I'm writing this on New Year's Day.

It is because the ski slopes await me and a few other fellow superintendents for a little "recharge" time. We leave tomorrow and the day we return is the deadline day for **Bull Sheet** articles for the February issue and also the day of our January MAGCS meeting. Today was the best chance for me to write before the deadline. At least I can start off the new year without procrastinating.

Hopefully you can find time soon to get away, with friends and/or family or better yet both, and "recharge". This so called "Off-Season" is short-lived and when we really look at it, it is still a busy time.

Hope to see you all in Dallas!

Aspen Grove Declared Heavyweight Champion

In the ongoing contest to identify the largest, heaviest, most awesome organism in the world, blue whales lost out to redwood trees. Redwoods were topped recently by a large soil fungus in Michigan, and now the fungus is dwarfed by a grove of quaking aspen trees in the mountains of Utah.

Three professors at the University of Colorado say that all 47,000 stems in the grove of aspen arose from the root of a single tree. This "growth" now covers 106 acres and weighs approximately 13.2 million pounds, perhaps three times more than the largest redwood, a *Sequoia gigantea* tree.

"Quaking aspen, already recognized as the most wide-spread tree species in North America, can now take its rightful place as an acknowledged giant among giants," life science professor Michael Grant, Jeffry Mitton, and Yan Linhart wrote recently in a letter to the English journal *Nature*.

The large clone of trees is located in the Wasatch Mountains, south of Salt Lake City. It was originally described in 1975 by a forestry researcher, Burton Barnes, from the University of Michigan.

The Colorado professors estimated that it is about 33 times heavier than a 396,000-pound blue whale, the largest animal on earth. The king-size fungus, which has spread through 37 acres of soil in northern Michigan, was estimated to weigh about 20,000 pounds.

Mitton said there is no accurate way to estimate the aspen grove's age.