

Keepers of the Green

by Tony Rzadzki, Supt., Cantigny Golf

"Golf developers and environmentalists are engaged in a round that is affecting the future of where the game will be played. And while the outcome of this match is uncertain, it is sure to alter the course of the game."

On a recent airline trip I happened to pull a magazine out of the seat sleeve in front of me. This article appeared in the April issue of 'Hemispheres' ... a rather popular magazine produced by United Airlines. The article was entitled 'How Green Are the Greens?' and was written by A.G. Pollard. I know nothing of Mr. Pollard's credentials or qualifications, but this poignant article should be read by all golf course superintendents. His point is concise and clear. We are at war! The following are some excerpts from his article.

"Behold the typical golf course. Here is what golfers see: a green oasis of nature's peace tucked away in a busy, rushing world ... here is what environmentalists see: a piece of manufactured abomination scraped out of the natural landscape by bulldozers. A destroyer of natural habitats, and a few hundred acres maintained only by the use of toxic, horrible chemicals that kill, maim, and mutilate many of God's creatures up to and including man himself."

"Talk to any golf course architect ... and they will tell you that the environmental rules and regulations required to build a golf course have come not only incredibly complex but add millions to the cost of developing a course."

"Indeed, environmental groups, such as the Audubon Society (NOT the Audubon Society of New York State our partner in our cause), the Sierra Club, and other wildlife preservation organizations, fight the good fight before permit-approval bodies at local and state levels to protect what they see as diminishing natural buffers, wildlife habitats, and the wetlands home of birds, fish, and reptiles. All of these creatures fall prey, they claim, to the encroachment of evil golf developments."

"It is not just the physical destruction of land that environmentalists object to. It is also the chemicals that they claim are disbursed in the form of pesticides, fungicides, and herbicides; toxic formulas that can be carried by rain and irrigation runoff into lakes, ponds, and streams, killing everything in the food chain from the snail darter on up."

The line in the sand has been drawn. It is quite obvious that the environmental movement has raised it's flag and the Paul Harveys everywhere are lining up to do battle with us. Mr. Pollard continues to weigh the issues.

"So who is right? Is there a middle ground in this ongoing debate? Probably not. There is no doubt that the construction of a golf course can be environmentally disruptive. Trees must be cut down, ponds dug or emptied, earth must be moved. Yet once finished, most golf courses become — unlike other forms of development such as shopping centers, office parks, or even neighborhoods — **hospitable and benevolent environments for wildlife**. And there is no doubt that developers, golf course architects, and course superintendents are getting a lot more sophisticated about environmental concerns by coming up with ways to assuage the concerns of bird lovers."

"And golf course superintendents, the men and women on the front lines of the battle with nematodes, mole crickets, and fungi of various sorts, have learned that the old way, which

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(Keepers of the Green continued)

was usually to mix up a vat of arsenic-based nasties and apply liberally, isn't necessarily the best long-term way to ensure lush greenery. Superintendents today have the sophistication of an ecobiologist who understands both chemical and natural means of killing pests and turf diseases. On-course studies of chemical effects and after effects are up, and the use of harmful stuff is down. Today's golf course is usually built with a special concrete wash-up area for draining and flushing chemical-bearing equipment, again to prevent unwanted runoff."

"Still, misinformation is ripe in today's green age. The New York State Environmental Protection Bureau issued a report in 1991 on health-related questions about golf and the environment. The report was provocatively titled 'Toxic Fairways', but the authors could only **speculate** about potential dangers of pesticides leaking into the groundwater: they simply **didn't have enough evidence**. Later, a team of scientists investigated ground water at four golf courses on Cape Cod, and while they found toxicologically significant levels of chemicals in the water, **none were pesticides being used on the golf courses.**"

"Still, the battles between environmental protectionists and developers trying to make a buck (or a few million of them) are joined almost every time someone says **golf course.**"

Mr. Pollard finishes his article with a nightmarish story about the Arthur Hills Construction of the Sanctuary Golf on the island of Sanibel. After over 3 years in delays and over \$13 million in environmental cost over runs, \$2 million of which included the construction of a new sewage treatment plant that the owner John Naumann **donated** to the city, the golf course was finally completed.

It is obvious that Mr. Pollard is on our side, I for one am glad he is not a member of Green Peace. Every seat on every airplane that United Airlines owns has this magazine in it. Quite possibly millions of people have read his story.

I felt compelled to relate some of his story to you so that you would all know that these problems are not going to disappear or be capably managed by anyone other than ourselves. We are on 'the front lines' every day. Our careers, our livelihoods, and our environment depend on the daily decisions that we make. I hope that Mr. Pollard's words help us all to realize more that the environmental battle wages on a national front. We must take the offensive, we must be proactive in our cause and take the initiative to show the world that we are true ... keepers of the green.

P.S. — If anyone would like a complete copy of 'How Green Are The Greens', give me a call and I'll send it to you.

EPA Mows Down Pollution

The Environmental Protection Agency is slapping pollution controls on gas-powered garden tools to clear the air in places like Phoenix, where desert heat and piped-in water make lawn mowing a year-round chore.

The nationwide standards announced Wednesday in Washington are expected to add about \$5 to the cost of a mower, leaf blower, weed trimmer or other tool.

Running a mower for an hour creates as much pollution as driving a new car for 11½ hours, the EPA said. One hour of using a leaf blower equals 34 hours of driving; for a chain saw, 63 hours of driving; for a weed trimmer, 21 hours.



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