

History of the Midwest Clinic

Editors Note: This is a very good history of our Midwest Clinic from 1953 to the early 1980s written in 1984 by Past President John Ebel, who is presently retired in Arizona. I was president in 1976; and, as you shall read, it was a difficult chore calling the session back to order after lunch at the Midwest Clinic that year. Thanks, John, for some background into our history.

*John Ebel, Superintendent
Barrington Hills Country Club*

The Search for Knowledge

As in all fields of endeavor, there are the pioneers: those who are not content to be in a state of inertia, people who are willing to climb a few moun-

tains, cross a river or two in search of knowledge.

Ray Davis, Frank Dinelli, Ed Stewart, Bob Williams, Bert Rost, Norm Johnson, Peter Bild, Bill Stupple, Wes Updegraff, Al Johnson, Amos Lapp, Paul Burdett, Walter Fuchs Sr., Ray Gerber, Don Strand and Gordon Brinkworth are all pioneers of the Midwest Clinic.

These men had a common desire to know more about their profession and a willingness to put that desire in motion, men of dedication and strong conviction. They hungered after knowledge to find the truth and to acquaint themselves with the facts of

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MAGCS Clinics

1953	Dec. 17-18	Medinah C.C.	Plant Diseases
1954	Dec. 2-3	U. of I. College of Pharmacy, Chicago	Soils
1955	Dec. 7-8	U. of I. College of Pharmacy, Chicago	Entomology
1956	Nov. 27-28	Olympia Fields C.C.	Practical Research
1957	Nov. 18-19	Olympia Fields C.C.	Practical Golf Course Management
1958	Nov. 18-19	Olympia Fields C.C.	Applied Research
1959	Dec. 1-2	Olympia Fields C.C.	Practical Research at Work
1960	Nov. 29-30	Olympia Fields C.C.	
1961	Dec. 6-7	Olympia Fields C.C.	The Stride of the Superintendent
1962	Nov. 27-28	Olympia Fields C.C.	Progress Through Understanding
1963	Nov. 19-20	Olympia Fields C.C.	A Review of 1963 and the 1964 Forecast
1964	Nov. 17-18	Medinah C.C.	Progress through Education and Research
1965	Nov. 16-17	Medinah C.C.	Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow
1966	Dec. 6-7	Medinah C.C.	Discussing the Dilemas
1967	Nov. 28-29	Medinah C.C.	Teeing Off for Tomorrow
1968	Nov. 19-20	Medinah C.C.	Modern Golf Course Operations
1969	Nov. 18-19	Medinah C.C.	The Superintendent: His Qualifications, Responsibilities and Requirements
1970	Nov. 17-18	Medinah C.C.	The Golf Course Today
1971	Nov. 16-17	Medinah C.C.	Something Old, Something New
1972	Nov. 14-15	Medinah C.C.	The Problems We Face
1973	Nov. 13-14	Medinah C.C.	Our Future Decisions
1974	Dec. 3-	Medinah C.C.	Our Future Decisions
1975	Dec. 3-4	Medinah C.C.	Communications and Motivations
1976	Dec. 1-2	Medinah C.C.	50 Years of Beautiful Golf Courses
1977	Nov. 30-	Medinah C.C.	Knowledge Thru Testing
1978	Nov. 29-30	Medinah C.C.	The Age of Change
1979	Nov. 27-28	Medinah C.C.	Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow
1980	Nov. 18-19	Medinah C.C.	Disease Update
1981	Nov. 17-18	Medinah C.C.	Heritage of Progress
1982	Nov. 11	Arlington Park Hilton	
1983	Nov.	Arlington Park Hilton	
1984			

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turfgrass culture, to study in more detail topics that had previously been superficially touched upon. They knew their "onions" but were concerned more about what they didn't know. What to do?

The following story is a synopsis of how these men set in motion the MAGCS's Turf Clinic.

The Birth of a Clinic

Some of our pioneer superintendents would meet informally to share their knowledge and understanding of golf course maintenance techniques. Contrary to rumors that most superintendents were secretive and unwilling to share what they had learned the hard way, these men would gather in such places as the Glen Oak Gun Club or in Frank Dinelli's rustic and nostalgic old office at Northmoor C.C., which was sometimes used for potting flowers, among other things, and discussing their problems and sharing ideas and solutions.

This embryonic group received support from other turf pioneers in the fields of education and business.

The first efforts to formalize their impromptu meetings came on December 17-18, 1953. It was a bone-chilling -10° day that found fifty hearty souls attending the first clinic at Medinah C.C. through the gracious invitation of Superintendent Ray Davis. They met in the Director's Room with Bob Williams as chairman of proceedings. Formal education was lacking in most superintendents in those days; and the presence of Dr. R. Voight, director of the U. of I. Drug and Horticultural Experiment Station and also in charge of turf plots at the Morton Arboretum, added a touch of class. Bringing additional academ-

ic strength to that first clinic was Dr. Klomprens, who was instrumental in procuring microscopes to be used in a hands-on demonstration of plant disease identification. For some, this was the first time they could actually see some of the little buggers under glass that were destroying their beautiful turf.

Dr. Bill Daniels, professor at Purdue University, was also in attendance as well as Dr. James Watson from the Toro Company. They helped in developing a chemical application chart which could be used by superintendents in choosing the best chemicals for disease control. The clinic was now launched.

Clinic No. 2 was held December 2-3, 1954, at the U. of I. College of Pharmacy in Chicago with sixty participants. Attendees

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were urged to commute by train via the Northwestern Station because of the lack of parking facilities near the college. Two days of intense lectures and lab work were lead by Dr. Jim Watson. The topic was "Soils, Their Origin and Substance."

With two successful clinics under their belts, our Midwest pioneers returned to the U. of I. College of Pharmacy on December 7-8, 1955, for the third Fall Clinic.

The subject this time was insects. Dr. Voight along with entomologist Dr. Bernard Greenburg presented information on the identification and life cycles of many major insects bugging the superintendent.

By 1956 it was evident that the Midwest Fall Clinic was for real and here to stay. November 27-28, 1956, marked the beginning of the Olympia Fields era. Hosted by Superintendent Gordon Brinkworth, Frank Dinelli, educational chairman, presented a program in which assistant superintendents and trainees shared results of practical research projects from the previous year. Our prominent guest speaker was O.J. Noer. This was our first big show. Olympia Fields was a long trip for some, and overnight accommodations could be had in the immense clubhouse. We had really turned the corner now.

In the early years of the clinic, it was difficult to obtain speakers; and many superintendents lacked confidence to stand up and speak. Someone once said, "It is better to keep your mouth shut and be thought stupid, than to open it and remove all doubt." One of the basic educational concepts of the clinic was to help superintendents articulate their

public speaking skills. Thanks to the clinic, today we have a wealth of good speakers in our ranks.

The Olympia Fields era continued from 1956 through 1963 with Warren Bidwell taking over as host superintendent in 1959. Some of the clinic themes during those years were "Practical Research at Work," "Progress Through Understanding," and "The Stride of the Superintendent."

December 6-7 saw such names on the program as Doug Jabaay, Tom Burrows and Jack Mauer. They were all assistants then and presented talks on the role of the assistant superintendent.

History was also made at that clinic. Our banquet featured a talent show with hairy-legged exotic dancers, musical interpretations from the Music Man and a banjo-playing flapper by the name

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of Charley Rack singing and playing "Shine on Harvest Moon." You had to see it to believe it.

The tenth clinic, November 27-28, 1962, reached a new high in attendance—116! On November 17-18, 1964, the clinic moved back to where it all started: Medinah C.C. Gerald Dearie Jr. was host superintendent. Panel discussions were becoming popular, and some distinguished panel members were Jim Latham, Jim Holmes, and Dr. Mike Britton. A dialogue skit with Gerald Dearie and John Ebel as superintendent and green chairman was presented. No Oscars were awarded. Celebrity guests graced the podium at the December 6-7, 1966, clinic in the persons of Mrs. Richard Daley and "Hey-Hey" man, Jack Brickhouse, voice of the Chicago Cubs. A touch of beauty was added when Suzie Frederickson, (you know, Harold's better half) gave a delightful talk entitled "Honey Your Supper Is in the Oven."

The Medinah years continued with a new host, Superintendent John Jackman, who replaced Gerald Dearie after his tragic and untimely death in 1968.

The clinic was a one-day affair in 1974. Maybe the Education Committee was a little tired that year. The theme for the clinic in 1976 was "50 Years of Beautiful Golf Courses," the title chosen in recognition of the MAGCS's 50th anniversary. The keynote speaker was Dr. Fred Grau. This clinic proved to be the most traumatic we have ever had. Fred's wife, Francis, suffered a fatal heart attack during lunch, and we were all stunned and felt so helpless.

Nineteen seventy-nine found a new superintendent at Medinah C.C. in the person of Don Pakkala. It was at this clinic that

one of its authors was honored on his retirement, with a "This Is Your Life, Bob Williams." Bruce Sering was the main conspirator in the well-thought-out and humorous presentation complete with color slides and testimonies.

The Medinah years continued through 1981, and it was with some reluctance that we left the hospitable confines of the majestic temple.

*"This Is Your Life,
Bob Williams."
Bruce Sering was
the main conspirator
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One of the problems facing turf managers in recent years was the frustration of having so many good educational activities going on at the same time in Illinois. A solution was found through the efforts of the Illinois Turfgrass Foundation, Inc.; the Central Illinois Golf Course Superintendents Association; the USGA Green Section; the U. of I. Cooperative Extension Service; and the U. of I. Office of Continuing Education and Public Service.

They founded the North Central Turfgrass Exposition in 1982. These combined groups drew 900 people in 1983 to the Arlington Park Hilton Expo Center. With the promise of continued growth and need for more space, the NCTE was moved to

the O'Hare Expo Center in Rosemont, Illinois.

The search for excellence has brought us a long way in the past thirty-two years. Although the Midwest Clinic has been somewhat absorbed by the NCTE, it should be remembered that the Midwest Clinic and its pioneers have been instrumental in establishing a reputation of leadership in education for the MAGCS, and it's accurate to say that the clinic has been helpful to such educational meetings as the Milwaukee (Wisconsin) Symposium and as a steering committee for the GCSAA Turf Conference.

The MAGCS Clinic is truly a pioneer and will always keep its identity.

The author apologizes for any and all errors and any omissions concerning the history of the Midwest Clinic. The many helps from our business and educational communities are acknowledged. Without them the struggle would have been much greater.

A special thanks to *the Bull Sheet* and its editors and to Bob Williams for providing all the information.

"Are any of you lacking in wisdom; let him ask of God, who gives to all men liberally and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."

James 1:5 KJV

Special Note: A one-day Turf Conference was held on March 14, 1953, at the U. of I. Drug and Horticultural Experiment Station near Downers Grove, Illinois, with two hundred people in attendance from seventeen related fields. The Midwest Clinic as we know it today was begun in December 1953. ■