

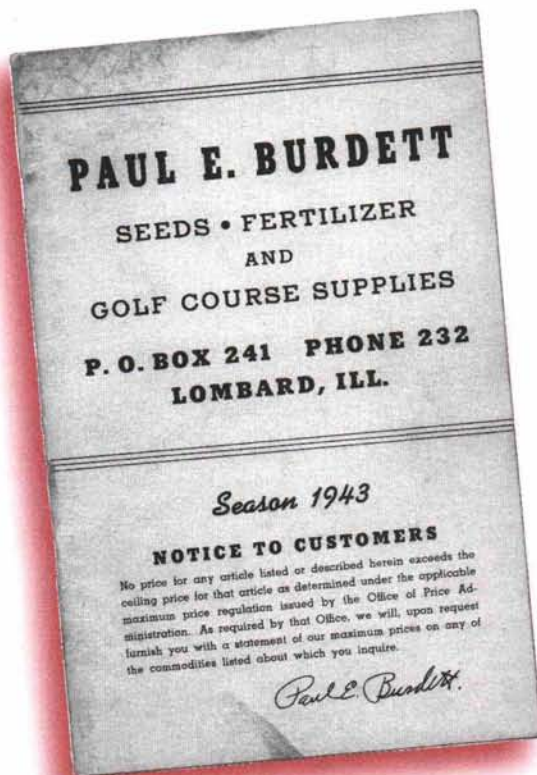
The end of an era . . .
well, sorta!

An Ode to Jim Burdett

Jim Burdett, a "major force" in the Chicago-area turf industry, retired as of March 1, 2000. Now we know why three years ago, Jim produced a catalogue titled "The Catalogue Until 2000." Jim has sold Burdett's Inc. and Master of the Links to Michael J. O'Neill. Mike will continue to operate both businesses, and obviously has a new catalogue.

Burdett's actually began in 1940 as Paul E. Burdett Co. (Paul was Jim's dad), with its principal business selling seeds, fertilizers and golf course supplies in the Chicago area. Paul Sr. knew the golf course business very well, having worked on many area courses during his youth. Among them was Olympia Fields. Paul's two sons, Paul Jr. and Jim, started working for their dad in the '50s (Jim started February 15, 1957). Paul Jr. passed away in October 1965, and Paul Sr. retired in 1972. Jim continued the Burdett business until it closed in 1977, but Jim wasn't out of the industry. For a short time in the early '80s, Jim worked for Builders Plumbing Supply before opening Burdett's Inc. in 1983. Good friends like Dudley Smith and Art Benson were instrumental in Jim reentering the golf supply business. They helped with ideas for new products, which Jim then produced. The famous 'seed-n-soil bucket' and 'steel step-down stake' are two such products.

(continued on page 32)



The inaugural 1943 catalog came complete with tear-out order forms—an innovation Burdett's started from day one.

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In 1988, Jim started Master of the Links with a small investment of \$1,300. Over the past 43 years Jim has logged more than a million miles in a variety of vehicles, which included, of all things, a bread truck before the advent of minivans. Jim is very appreciative of his customers. "The loyalty and comradeship of the golf course superintendents have been the most wonderful parts of this business," Jim reflects. Jim has seen many changes in the industry but feels "the biggest change is in the education and professionalism of everyone involved."

Art Benson, who Jim called on at Butterfield C.C. for many years, states, "The thing that I really liked about Jim was that he didn't try to do the greenkeeping for you. He had several products that he offered for a particular use and let you decide which to use." Dudley Smith of Silver Lake C.C.

adds, "Jim's biggest attribute was his service. There were times where he would make a delivery at 10 a.m. on a Sunday. Once when area superintendents were feeling a need to lower their soil pH, there was no local source of granular sulfur. Jim located a source in Louisiana and drove there overnight in his truck to bring back a truckload of sulfur."

Jim and his lovely bride of 40 years, Marilyn, plan to stay in the area. Their retirement plans include a trip to Hawaii this March, church activities, home remodeling and playing cards with their many friends. Jim also plans to help Mike O'Neill develop new products if his busy schedule allows.



quite valuable to me. We all share many common problems and issues regarding our courses.

I also discovered that we, as members and chapters, do not use the GCSAA enough. Headquarters features a fantastic staff just waiting to assist the membership. Each department gave us short presentations describing what they have to offer. I would suggest that when you have a concern with anything from public relations to membership, give them a call. Remember that the GCSAA works for you. While I don't want to sound like a commercial for the GCSAA, do remember—the GCSAA works for you.

In closing, I would again like to thank the membership for entrusting me with the responsibilities of my current office. It is a trust I do not take lightly. If you have any questions or ideas, please feel free to contact me.



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