



No Bull: The History and Legacy of Your Magazine

As I ponder my final director's column (of which there have been but two), I can't help but think back, not only of my "cup of coffee" on the Board, but of our Association's growth and improvement through its 75 years of existence. Make no bones about it—we HAVE grown and we HAVE improved. Our magazine, to which it has been my ultimate pleasure to contribute, is better than ever, and will continue to be the best the industry has to offer under its next Editorial Committee chairman. I must confess at this juncture that I personally played a miniscule role in the development of this publication—the people who do the real work are those we don't see very often. People like Cathy Miles Ralston, our editor; Mark Karczewski, our graphic artist; Darwill Press, our printer; and all of our generous advertisers are the fuel that keep On Course's engine running.

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This year in particular—the 75th anniversary of the Midwest Association of Golf Course Superintendents—generated numerous new challenges for our editorial staff, and I hope you agree that these challenges were met with aplomb. Our "Decades" articles highlighted the historical progress of not only our Association, but also our world. These features were written by members of the Editorial Committee—volunteers who gave of their time and effort more than should have been asked. The research involved in producing these articles was extensive, and the time expended was huge. I hope that you, our faithful readers, enjoyed and appreciated them as much as we relished creating them. I send my heartfelt thanks to this year's Editorial Committee—Chuck Anfield, Dave Braasch, Jon Jennings, Shane Kissack, Bob McCallum, Erwin McKone, Jim McNair, Larry Tomaszewski and Dr. Randy Kane—who went beyond the extra mile to make our 75th year something a little more special. Our "The Way We Were" features were another addition that we hope you enjoyed. Groping through the old photo archives to find subjects for this feature was a great deal of fun, and a great way to get acquainted with our past. Hopefully, once our Association moves to Golf House, these historical items, along with a complete library of *Bull Sheet* and *On Course*, will be available to our members for their perusal.

For your own edification, I thought you might like to know a little history regarding our magazine. In 1947, the MAGCS Board thought it was high time its members had a newsletter to keep up with the local goings-on, so they set about the task of initiating one. First and foremost, a name was needed. Bob Williams, then of Beverly Country Club, remembered the newsletter from Fort Campbell,

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Kentucky, where he was stationed during the war, and suggested the name *Bull Sheet* for the new venture. That name stuck, and an editorial staff was chosen. Editor Norm Johnson and associate editors William Stupple, Bob Williams, Ray Gerber, John Coghill, Raymond Didier and Paul Burdett began producing the two-page mimeographed newsletter, and sent out the first issue in January of 1948.

By 1950, *the Bull Sheet* had grown sufficiently in size and circulation to warrant its being printed professionally. Ever-Redi Printing, Inc. of LaGrange was chosen, and remained the official printer of *Bull Sheet* until December of 1995. When membership decreed that a name change was necessary to enhance the professional image of the magazine in mid-1995, a survey was sent out to all MAGCS members asking for suggestions for the new moniker. More than 200 entries poured in, and the Editorial Committee chose five finalists: *Windy City Turf*, *Midwest Breezes*, *On The Green*, *Modern Links* and *On Course*. The winner was chosen, and the man behind the name was again Bob Williams!

With this new name came an updated look, including color photography interspersed throughout the magazine. This also necessitated a new printer with more modern capabilities, so Darwill Press became our new printer after 45 years with Ever-Redi. In June of 1999, Cathy Miles Ralston came on board as the magazine's twelfth editor upon Fred Opperman's retirement after 16 years at the helm. Before Fred, Ray Gerber had been editor from 1972 to July of 1983, when he passed away. Shortly after Ray's death, the Ray Gerber Editorial Award was conceived to honor the best article written by a superintendent and printed first in *Bull Sheet/On Course*. This year marks the 15th presentation of the award

(no awards were given in 1989, 1991, 1994 and 1996 because of an insufficient number of eligible articles). Before Ray, nine other men had held the post of editor—Norm Johnson, Don Strand, Bill Stupple, Bert Rost, Ted Woehrl, Doug Jabaay, Tom Burrows, Dick Trevarthan and Roger LaRochelle. All of these people and events played a significant role in shaping the magazine you are reading right now (if I have managed not to bore you into a deep slumber).

As I step down from my position on your Board of Directors, I feel more confident than ever that the MAGCS is in very capable hands. My decision to leave the Board is strictly due to the "Thanksgiving Phenomenon"—everything looks so good that you overfill your plate, only to discover that you can't possibly finish everything you've piled on. I very much enjoy working on this magazine, and will continue to do so in the capacity of contributing editor and as a member of the Editorial Committee (if the new guy will have me) for as long as I am wanted. With these duties in mind, and upon observing the commitment of time and energy that Don Ferreri and Brian Bossert have exerted in their respective presidencies, I now realize that my plate is full enough, and I'm a skinny guy anyhow.

So, as I "walk out the door," I offer these final thoughts on our magazine. We, in my humble opinion, have a very fine publication. Compared to others in the industry, *On Course* simply outshines the competition. Each year, we enter *On Course* in the GCSAA chapter newsletter contest, and each year we come up short for one reason or another. Usually, we hear grumblings about "Bull Sheet" being an unprofessional name for our "news-around-town" section. We hear that some of the language our writers use is less than appropriate (my own writings have been singled out more than once). My own opinion is that you, our writers, should feel free to express yourselves in any manner you wish. If colorful words the likes of "crap" and "damn" are chosen to make a point or to bring some humor into an article, I say use them! Write your articles, and be creative doing it. Make them fun to read. Stir up the water a bit. And if "shut your pie hole" is what you want to say to get your point across, go ahead and say it. If this freedom of expression offends the judges of a contest, then perhaps the contest is not worth winning.

There goes this year's chance at an award... 

A Midwest Memory . . .



The first-ever Pro-Greenskeepers Golf Tournament, held in September 1948, was a "cementing of relationships," according to MAGCS elder statesman Bob Williams. Pictured here are (L to R) Charles Penna, then golf pro at Beverly C.C.; Bob Williams, then Beverly's superintendent; Norm Johnson, then superintendent at LaGrange C.C.; and Jim Foulis, then pro at LaGrange.