



Hats Off...

When Don Ferreri stepped down as president of the Midwest, he handed me off to an energetic group called the Green Industry. Some outgoing presidents give pardons, others give . . . oh well. In any event, I would like to highlight this group's recent activities.

The Green Industry conducted a survey last year: a fairly painful set of questions for agencies, institutions and others within the state, who produce, maintain, use or sell plant material to enhance human environments. Among other things, this survey was geared at assessing the economic importance of the green industry, documenting the structure of the industry and identifying the strategic issues for future development and study. Well, the economic story is ready for the telling.

- The value of green industry sales was nearly \$2.9 billion—more than corn production, more than soybean production and larger than beef and pork production combined.
- The combined value of green industry product sales, service receipts and end-user payrolls amounts to over \$3.9 billion.
- Maintained turfgrass area in Illinois equals over 1.5 million acres. Golf courses and driving ranges account for only 4.3% of that total.
- The combined workforce attributed to green industry activities, for all sectors in Illinois, totaled 159,769 with an annual payroll of over \$1.74 billion. (I'll save you the math; average annual wage \$10,890.)
- The fair market value of all assets directly associated with producing or maintaining green areas and plants in Illinois is over \$8 billion.

It is the Green Industry's hope that this information will influence legislative initiatives and bring more research dollars to the sector. I recently attended a meeting with this group and was impressed to see roughly a dozen University of Illinois representatives in attendance. This is pretty serious business down on the campus! In the months ahead, a press release will go out statewide in the largest metro areas. The group, which includes representatives from roughly 17 associations, is also looking to form an umbrella group. This will improve our representation, and it is great to see these related groups working so closely together. In fact, a few MAGCS Board members were slated to attend a "Day at the Capitol" in late February. The meeting would be

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*What do the
Green Industry,
the MAGCS 75th
Anniversary
Committee,
Dudley Smith,
Albie Staudt and
Danny Quast
have in common?*

an opportunity for green industry members to see the House and Senate in session and meet our political representation. I'll report more in the months ahead.

Within our own association, there is plenty of news. At the end of January, the 75th Anniversary Committee got together for a second time. Don Ferreri is chairing this committee, and a great deal of thought is being put into celebrating our anniversary year. All in all, pretty exciting and I'll applaud the efforts of the committee in advance; there is plenty of work going on behind the scenes. It's a real honor to lead the association during such a special occasion.

Congratulations go out to Dudley Smith for receiving the MRTF Distinguished Service Award. Dudley received the award in January down at the MRTF conference in Indianapolis. He had a few words to say about loyalty (40+ years at Silver Lakes, I believe) and a few words to say about the lack of it that shows up in our business from time to time. There's more to life than chasing the next big paycheck. He also shared a humorous story of being "right-sized" much earlier in his career. At the twilight of his career, Dudley still attends meetings, still has a fire in his belly and stays close to the action. Some people are just born leaders.

If you were in attendance at Poplar Creek, you were not only treated to a great meal, but also you heard that GCSAA has recently awarded Albie Staudt "lifetime member" status. Albie has been a GCSAA member for 50 years! He's mighty proud of the honor and he should be. As with Dudley, high praise for Albie: still attending our meetings regularly and with his heart still close to the action.

Last, a mentor to many is stepping down to serve the industry in another capacity. After 12 years at the helm, Danny Quast is leaving Medinah Country Club this spring. I was employed at Medinah in 1989 when Danny took over, and that doesn't make me an expert on him, but I would like to pass along some perspectives on a wonderful man. I'll need to start by saying that he was replacing Pete Wilson and anyone that ever worked for Pete learned to respect him. I was pretty bitter about Pete's departure and didn't exactly welcome Danny with open arms or an open mind. I was, after all, 25 years old and surely knew more than a guy who would wear a flannel shirt with a tie. No kidding, it happened at the first green committee meeting he attended, although I don't think the minutes will reflect that.

Well, Danny had plenty of big ideas and I wasn't buying into too many of them. He wanted the respective course superintendents to share responsibilities and periodically rotate course assignments. I thought that was a particularly silly concept and told him so. Well, I got to stay put on course #2 (referred to by some as the ladies' course) and Danny moved a more willing chap over to course #3 (referred to by some as the championship or tournament course). Guess I showed him a thing or two. Grinding my teeth the whole way, I began to buy into Danny's methods and madness. I had to because they passed the acid test; they worked! Danny was also a real gentleman to work with; always offering encouragement and praise and never failing to introduce me to members, salesmen and the many friends he had in the business. He wanted none of the spotlight and glory and passed it along to as many as he could. He has a great sense of humor and a perspective that keeps life ahead of his work.

Danny shared the whole job with his course superintendents and we got a taste for the political end of the spectrum; attending those marathon greens committee meetings really helped me in the future. He was a master at work in those meetings, anticipating the next comment and staying one step ahead of the angle at all times. He also had a gift for being able to break down technical turf-grass jargon to his committee members. Not everything was easy going for Danny. He lost a daughter unexpectedly early in his tenure at Medinah and the entire staff felt his loss. He had a few health issues of his own, but always maintained an upbeat attitude, a sort of "roll with the punches" outlook. And I'll never forget the day we shared a Coke in the course #3 snack shop when my own personal life was unraveling a bit. He was very understanding and a friend whenever I needed one.

We haven't worked together for 10 years, but through experience, I've started to acquire an appreciation for what the job requires and Danny has always been a consummate professional through the good and not-so-good times. It is no secret that some shots went his way during the last PGA tournament, and he defended his staff, offered no excuses and threw no verbal punches back. What a credit to the profession! Let's face it, it's not so tough to be a nice guy when everything goes right. I felt what it was like to be **really** proud of a good friend. Thanks, Danny, for everything; you've had a very positive impact on many lives. You and Beverly enjoy life north of the border. I know there was a green and gold part of your heart that never left that state. 