

The Story of Tony Meyer

Editor's Note: This special edition of "The Way We Were" profiles the life and times of Tony Meyer, long-time superintendent of Woodridge Golf Club who passed away in April.

RED MEADOW LAKE COURSE				RED MEADOW LAKE COURSE			
MEN'S PAR				WOMEN'S PAR			
hcp	YARDS	pin		pin	YARDS	hcp	
9	399	4	1	4	399	9	
3	392	4	2	4	392	3	
17	152	3	3	3	152	17	
1	507	5	4	5	477	1	
11	198	3	5	3	185	11	
7	363	4	6	4	363	7	
15	313	4	7	4	313	15	
13	315	4	8	4	315	13	
5	372	4	9	4	372	5	
	2971	35	WT		35	2928	
14	279	4	10	4	279	14	
16	285	4	11	4	285	16	
8	382	4	12	4	382	8	
6	399	4	13	4	399	6	
18	278	4	14	4	278	18	
12	239	3	15	4	239	12	
2	346	5	16	5	466	2	
10	244	3	17	4	244	10	
4	412	4	18	5	412	4	
	3064	35	III		38	2984	
	6035	70	TOTAL		73	5912	
HANDICAP				HANDICAP			
NET SCORE				NET SCORE			
DATE				DATE			
SCORER				ATTEST			

Tuesday, September 27, 1960: "11:00 a.m. I went to play Olympia Fields C.C. today. I played the number 4 course."

Last November, I'm at the Midwest Turf Clinic at Medinah C.C. listening avidly to the panel discussion between Pete Leuzinger, Dan Quast and Paul Voykin. They sit before us, waiting to field the next question . . . questions like, what are the major changes in the industry you have seen over the past 30 years? What do you see coming in the next 30 years? Who was the biggest influence in your life? How would you like to be remembered once you have left the business? We only scratch the surface of their personalities with questions like those and never really get to see what they are all about. I guess we would call these fellows the grandfathers of our business, or better yet, the pioneers. In my family life, I never really got to know my grandfathers on either side, and by the time I realized these guys were information superhighways, it was too late. Back in January, however, I did have the opportunity to speak at length with one of our professional forefathers, Tony Meyer, at his residence in Lisle, Illinois. Tony and I had only had limited conversations on various occasions, and it was through those conversations that I realized I really wanted to sit down and talk to this guy and find out what the business was like before my time. This story may feel like you are reading the manuscript from *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty* or it might even resemble *VH-1's "Behind the Music"* minus the sex, drugs and rock-and-roll. Anyway, sit back, relax and let's take a trip down memory lane.

Page One

The story begins in 1959 during Tony's bookkeeper years at the Morton Arboretum. Peter Bild had resigned as golf course superintendent of Woodridge Golf Club due to illness, which led general manager Ted Hammerschmidt on the hunt for a new greenkeeper. Ted didn't have to look far, as his answer was across the street working in a farm field (Tony had a second job). Tony's wife Marjorie was already working as a secretary for Woodridge Golf Club (she started in 1957); thus, Ted approached Tony and offered him the job. At first, Tony declined the position because he was not familiar with the chemicals used on golf course grasses. Ted's response to that was "if you can grow crops, you can grow grass." Ted offered to hire somebody to help educate Tony on the chemicals used on golf course turf.

As an aside, here is a little-known tidbit of information about Woodridge Golf Club. Prior to the purchase of Woodridge Golf Club by the Hammerschmidt family, it was known as the old Baine Country Club, a club that was unable to support itself and forced to close. Hammerschmidt's original plan was to use the golf course as a gravel pit, but then he realized how profitable a public golf facility would be. The vacant golf course was used as a pasture for a short period of time before restoration to its original layout.

Let the Tenure Begin!

Tony began his venture at Woodridge Golf Club in 1959. Maintaining this 36-hole monstrosity would test his every skill. His crew consisted of 12 full-time employees, of whom five remained over the winter-



The Meyer clan assembled to celebrate Marge Meyer's 85th birthday. Pictured are, front row (L to R): Sue, Tony, Marge and Mary Ann; back row (L to R) Dave, Bill, Jim and Bob.

time to maintain equipment and perform clubhouse maintenance and snow removal. The equipment in use included two old Toro tractors, a Ford tractor with wide tires and a John Deere tractor, all accompanied by a set of Roseman gang units to mow the fairways and rough, which were all cut to the same height. The greens were mowed with walking greens mowers, which required several bodies to complete this task on weekends before the golfers hit the golf course. Tony chuckles as he recalls, "I had nine boys sleep on my porch to mow greens on Saturdays and Sundays so they wouldn't oversleep. We didn't have triplex greens mowers in those days, they hadn't been invented yet."

The sprayer in use was a 500-gallon FMC with a centrifugal-driven pump that saw such chemicals as Koban for pythium, Urimate and Dyrene for dollar spot, PMA and Thiram for brown patch, Banvil for weeds, and Chlordane as an insecticide. As an IPM approach to controlling pythium, Tony applied lime to the greens. Unheard of at this time, it appeared to work. The crew also used ground-up kelp to fertilize the greens . . . and we act like Panacea Plus is a new idea these days! Interesting fact: ground-up kelp was used to help keep mares in foal. For you city folk, that means that the timeframe for making a baby could be prolonged, kinda like Viagra.

The irrigation water was of poor quality and came directly from the

DuPage River. Imagine that, river water being of poor quality! The irrigation system comprised the old diesel-engine pump station with the quick coupler and rollerbase system. A night waterman manned the system in the evenings and had a unique storage system for the hoses and sprinklers. Around every green was a 3' x 2' concrete storage bin dug into the ground that contained the hose with the sprinkler. If you look in your most recent *Golf Course Management* magazines, you will see ads for this type of product on the market. Gee, old-time idea, but designed to turn a profit these days. This technique in those days saved a lot of time searching for the quick coupler and the hose that could have been left behind any number of trees.

The custom-blend topdressing consisted of two-thirds humus, one-third two-year-old mink manure (turkey excrement is the "in" thing these days), and one 50-pound bag of Turface to each half-yard of the above mixture, all mixed onsite. I would imagine that the person who screwed up that particular week was stuck with this job of hand-mixing. We all know how bad Sustane smells out of the bag. Ever been to a mink farm? Liquid fertilizer applications were accomplished by mixing a portion of a 12-4-8 water-soluble fertilizer in a five-gallon bucket. From there, it was transferred into a bottle at the end of a hose and applied to the greens.

The golf course did flood quite frequently after heavy rain. The

cleanup consisted of using more water to remove silt and other debris from the turf. Once all the debris were removed, helicopters came in to help dry out the golf course and to provide air circulation.

Outside of his work on the golf course, Tony served on the MAGCS Board of Directors in the mid-1960s and remained a member of both the MAGCS and GCSAA for 42 years. That's three dog years, if compared to Albie Staudt's run. Tony retired in 1989 after 30 years of service to Woodridge Golf Club. The course has since been bought out by an Ohio-based company, had its name and design changed, and is now in the capable hands of Don Ferreri as Seven Bridges Golf Club. Don, will you be there that long?

Family and Community

Tony and his wife Marge have six wonderful children scattered throughout the country. Mary Ann Bobosky resides in Naperville and works in the Naperville School District 203 doing administrative work. Dave Meyer also resides in Naperville and followed in his dad's footsteps. He was the superintendent at Nordic Hills and Indian Lakes for 22 years

(continued on page 36)

*Monday, June 6, 1969:
"Went with Dave Meyer to Illinois Lawn session at Palos C.C. Mel Shurtliff and Ceicel Kerr from Chipman Chemical Company spoke mostly on weed and Poa control. Some of the talk on ice sheet, don't let ice cover greens for more than 25 days."*

before becoming part owner in a couple of different golf facilities in the far west suburbs. Sue Baron resides in Hayward, Wisconsin and owns and operates the Twin Bay Resort with her husband. Dr. Bill Meyer resides in Coltsneck, New Jersey and took over for Reid Funk, who retired as head of the Turf Research and Breeding Program at Rutgers University. Jim and Bob Meyer both reside in North Carolina, where they are co-owners of Nues River Veterinarian Hospital in Zebulon. All of these kids provided Tony with 16 grandchildren and 18 great-grandchildren, giving Ma and Pa Kettle a run for their money.

Despite his large family, Tony still found time to serve on the Board of Trustees for the Lisle and Woodridge Fire Department for 40

*Sunday,
February 2, 1969:
"Groundhog
saw his shadow today."*

years and resided as president for the past 20 years. Unfortunately, Tony passed away at the age of 87 during the author's efforts to compose this article. So, the next time you talk with a grandfather, your father or somebody you look up to in our business, cherish the moments, as they will be precious. May Tony rest in peace. Amen.



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Hole	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	TOTAL
Yards	400	375	473	137	342	184	530	187	364	399	379	473	137	342	184	530	187	364	399
Par	4	3	4	3	4	3	4	3	4	3	4	3	4	3	4	3	4	3	4
Score	1548	1328	1743	1187	1342	1184	1890	1287	1464	1599	1379	1743	1187	1342	1184	1890	1287	1464	1599
Handicap	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19

Hole	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	TOTAL
Yards	389	396	407	397	408	363	393	372	418	383	396	407	397	408	363	393	372	418	383
Par	4	3	4	3	4	3	4	3	4	3	4	3	4	3	4	3	4	3	4
Score	1548	1328	1743	1187	1342	1184	1890	1287	1464	1599	1379	1743	1187	1342	1184	1890	1287	1464	1599
Handicap	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19

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