

FEATURE  
Luke Cella, *Publisher*

## Established 1926

*Having been over for more than seven years in 1926, the war was a thing of the past. There was plenty of time for America to convert from a wartime to a peacetime economy. The country prospered as radical changes occurred; more Americans lived in cities than in rural farm communities. It was the time of the \$5 workday, a good wage for those days as the workweek shortened in hours, creating more leisure time. People had money to spend as America became the richest nation on Earth and our culture of consumerism was born. Henry Ford sold over 15 million Model T's, roads were being paved and Americans headed out to explore the United States. It only took 13 days to drive from New York to California. The economic boom that propelled the nation impacted the game of golf as the number of courses grew from the mid 200s in the late teens to nearly 1,100 courses by 1930.*

The art of greenkeeping was just that, an art. It wasn't based on science until the USGA and the USDA developed a formal science and the results were made available to those in the profession. Furthermore, as the demand for course conditioning grew, the profession of greenkeeping took hold as the work shifted from the golf professional and or green chairman to the greenkeeper. Several colleges and universities soon began to conduct turfgrass research and offer formal courses for the profession. Regional associations, clubs and a national association of greenkeepers were formed by men with the foresight, drive and perseverance to give each greenkeeper the knowledge and tools to manage the golf course

they oversaw the best that it could be. These pioneers took the principles of the game and applied them to the profession to make golf better for all.

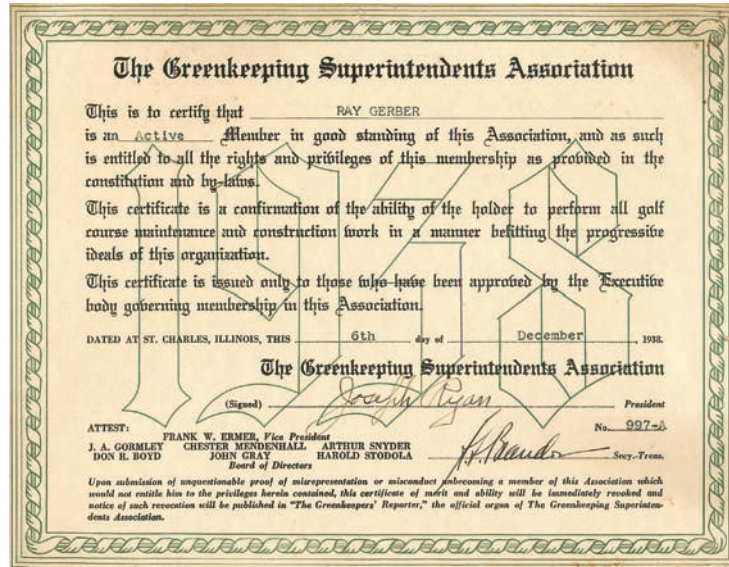
A day in the life of a greenkeeper was a little different than it is today, but I'm careful with this statement, as I think you'll see why. After all, the basic components of the golf course are still the same. People play the game, and they are still unchanged. They follow the same basic rules of the game, using clubs and balls on the same components that make up the field of play. Things and objects might be called

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something else or use another name (i.e. superintendent) but the basic tenets have not altered. We are more efficient, can do more with less, practices and techniques have advanced but the outcome is still the same – greens were mowed each day as they are today. “We pole the greens every morning the very first thing. We never mow a green under any circumstances until it has been poled. The mowing is done with hand mowers, always catching the clippings. Once a week during the growing season we recut the bent greens with a power mower using a steel brush in front to stand the runners up. Sometimes we find it necessary to recut some of the greens at different angles,” Fred Kruger, 1928.

Greenkeepers tried to educate their committees and warn them against the pitfalls of comparing golf courses to each other. “When comparisons are made of golf courses they should be made by a committee of experts who take into consideration the money that was expended in the construction, the drainage, the general locality, the expen-



diture for equipment, etc., and also whether it is per U.S.G.A. standard or whether it is to suit its own committee and members.” H.C. Moore, 1927.

If you are trying to switch your turf to a new cultivar, you do your homework and use turf plots and trials to make the selections. “In spite of the articles appearing in all golf periodicals extolling the merits of creeping bent this class of grass was the least appealed to the members, and in order to show them that bent

was the grass for our course we had to plant a nursery and showed the Green committee what bent would do.” Alex McCallum 1927. No matter what new thing you are going to try, it always makes sense to have a test plot “Before inaugurating a new practice on a general scale it is always advisable first to try it out on a small scale. Every golf course should have its experimental garden.” The Bulletin of the United States Golf Association Green Section, 1928.

We manage our turf stands to our weakest link, for most, it is *Poa annua*. Even if we have that under control, the seed



“I’ll make dollar spot pay.”



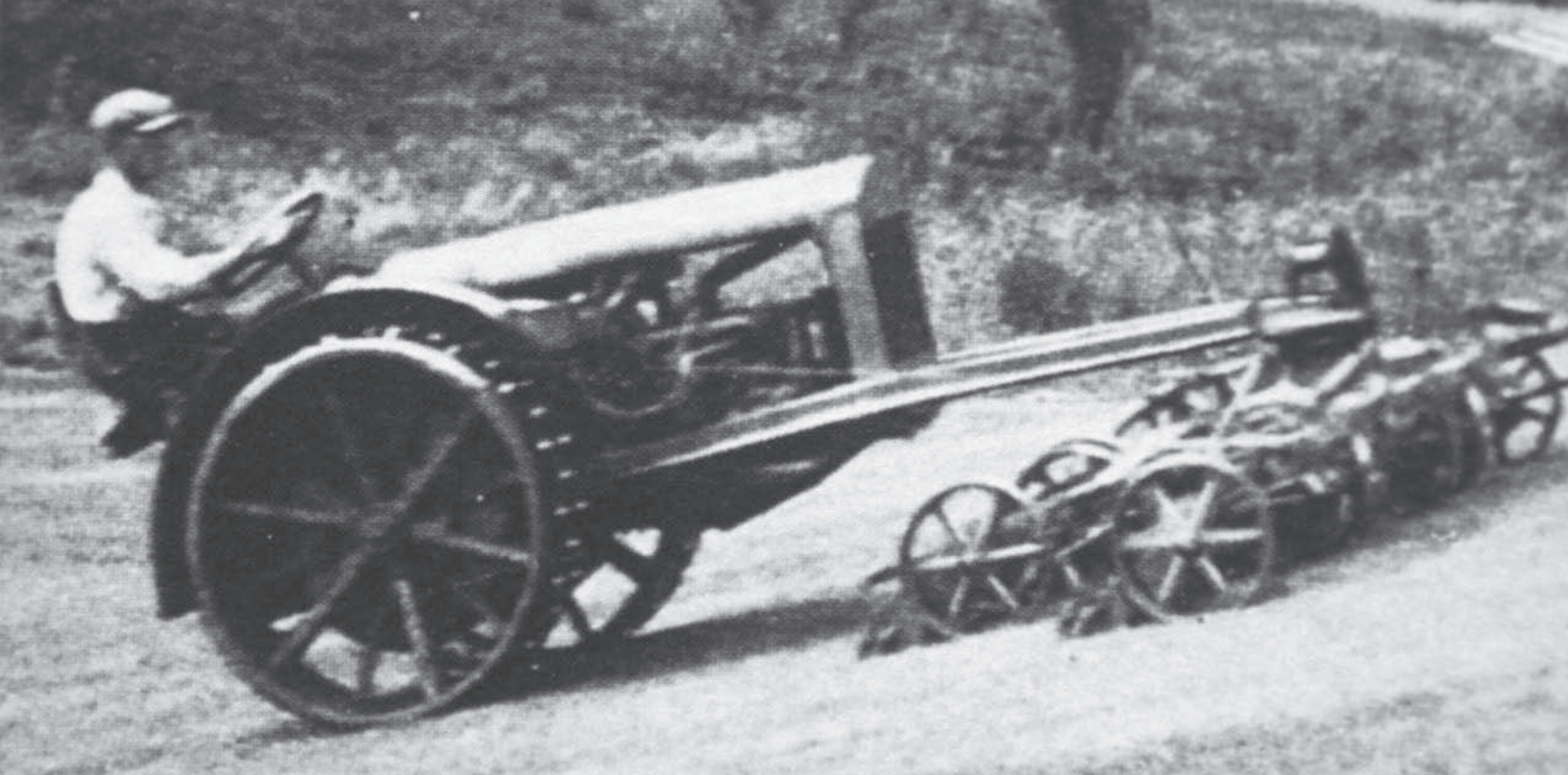
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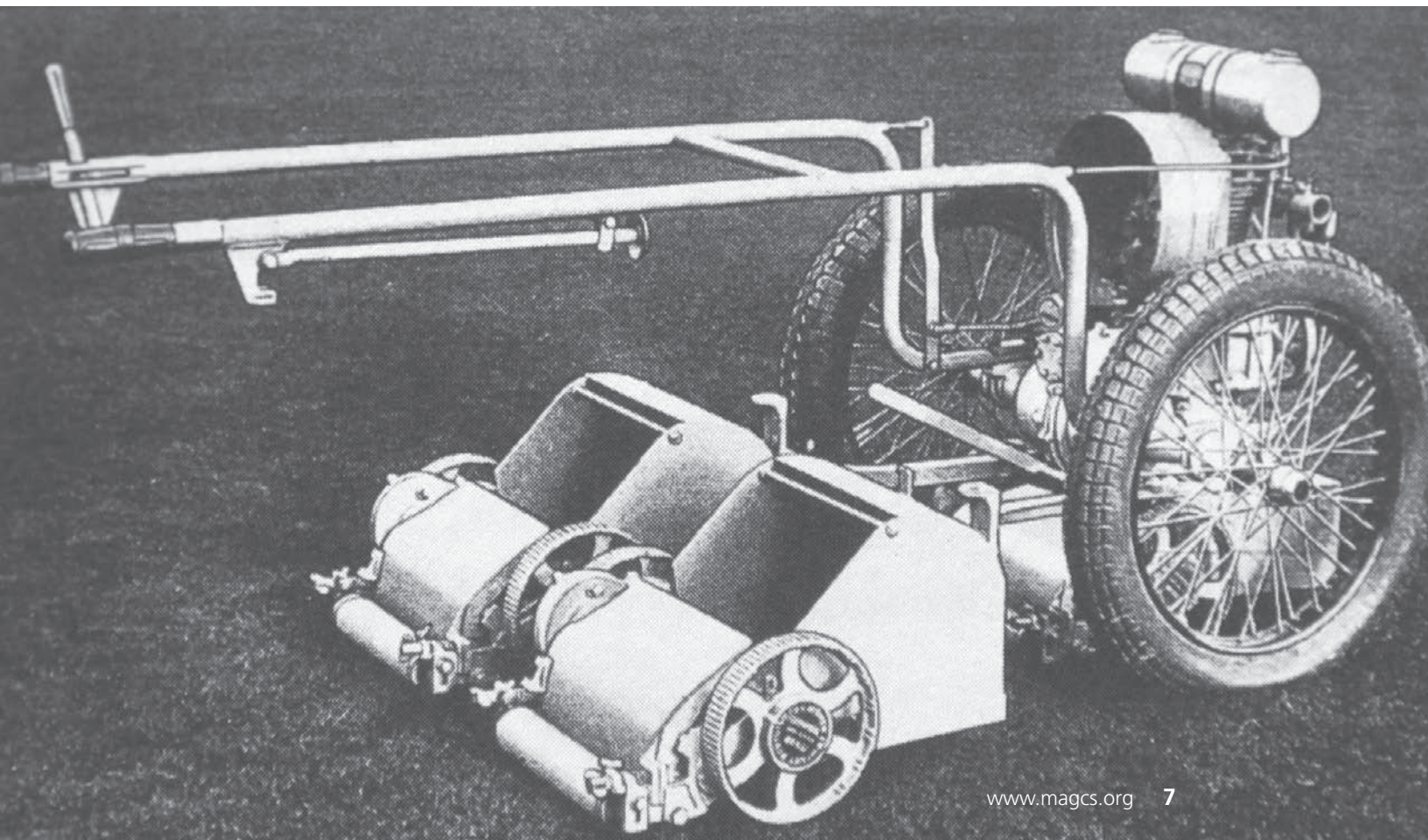




heads are a concern. "If only scattered plants occur in the turf, it is sometimes objectionable, as it may make the putting surface uneven. No matter how closely the grass is cut it will still blossom and make seeds at the very surface of the ground." C.V. Piper and R.A. Oakley, 1924. Furthermore, we know that grain is not an issue with how low we can go with our mowers, and thought it was only something greenkeepers

fought in the early days. "The better strains of creeping bent never form a "grain" because of the fact that under turf conditions their blades are so crowded together as to stand upright." Piper, 1927.

To finely manicule a golf course means attention is paid to the detail work. The devil is in the trifles. "Train your men  
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to look out for the mere trifles. Greens and fairways alone have no beauty – it is what goes with them, trees shrubs, hills etc., that give them their artistic effect, but so many times these are mere trifles in the way of dead branches, broken limbs, fallen twigs that are left untouched, side shoots from young trees that ought to have been removed, give a neglected and untidy appearance.” Fred Sherwood, 1927.

How many conversations have you had with fellow superintendents and commercial representatives about the benefits of specific products? “At this season of the year there is always much discussion as to what chemicals are best for controlling brown-patch.” John Monteith, Jr., 1927.

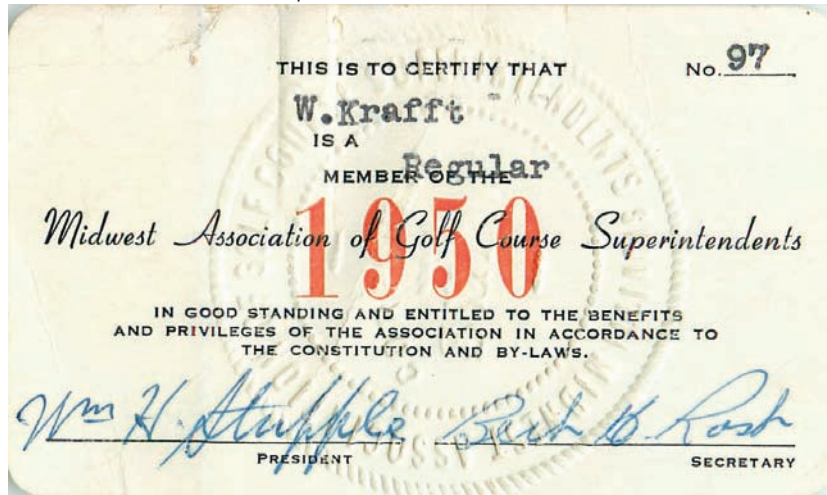
Golfers have high expectations for the conditioning of the course no matter the time of year or as we continually talk about, the weather. “Golfers are prone to be unreasonable and demand perfect putting turf irrespective of weather conditions...Members pay to play golf and expect well groomed turf at all times.” O.J. Noer, 1929.

The best irrigation system in the world can't compete with a man and a hose when it comes to taking care of hot spots on a course. “Extreme care in watering seems important to avoid excesses, and during the hot months may mean hand watering greens blessed with low lying pockets or surface runways. When sprinklers are used these areas frequently become saturated due to surface movement from the surrounding higher areas.”

O.J. Noer, 1929.

Water quality and quantity defines the quality of turf. “No greenkeeper, however competent, can keep a course in excellent condition now required, without adequate water facilities.” Welton, Kenneth. 1928.

How many times have you heard that it is just common sense for the golf course superintendent to be on staff when a course is being built? “If the greenkeeper is engaged in the early stages of the construction and can see the course developed from the start, he will be better able to determine the methods of conditioning the course for play.” Dearie, Edward B. Jr. 1928.



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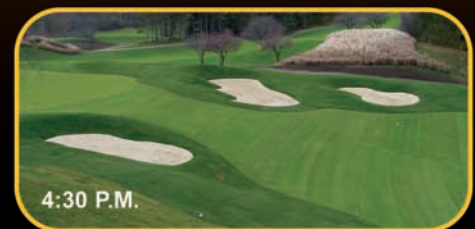
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# MIDWEST ASSOCIATION OF GOLF COURSE SUPERINTENDENTS



MIKE BAVIER...Candidate-National Board



wise to talk over with him, as his judgment is generally more sound and less expensive than that of the "expert" who is so often called in by club officials." MacGregor, John. 1928.

If turf in a specific area suffers because of poor drainage or lack of air movement, no amount of chemicals or fertilizers will remedy the problem. "Fertilizers will not effect permanent turf improvement if major injury is due to impervious water-saturated soil." Furthermore, "Better drainage (1) makes lands dry up earlier in the spring and prevents water standing after rains; (2) warms the soil so that the season is lengthened in both spring and fall; (3) ventilates and increases air content of the soil so that organic matter is decomposed; (4) removes the injurious salts and acids; (5) favors deep root development; (6) prevents winter kill; (7) prevents shrinkage and cracking of soils in periods of drought." O.J Noer, 1929

Animals are still a problem on fine turfs especially when they are hunting for food. "How do you get rid of skunks rooting up the ground? ...is to remove the cause by getting rid of these grubs (also works for robins that will molest your greens)". McNamara, John. 1928.

Golfers still join clubs or go to courses to play golf. "I wonder when golf clubs will recognize the greenkeeper is the man who holds the key to their membership? He is working hard for his club, sometimes under adverse conditions. Give the greenkeeper a fair show, and he will produce. Anything pertaining to improvements which run into money, it is

We live in a society where people want things right away. Impatience and entitlement rule the day and are principles that are brought to the golf course by the players. "Today golf courses are run in a business manner...We are living in a mechanical age today and most of our club members and some of our club officials, I am sorry to say, think mechanically. They have drifted far from nature. They are of the opinion that a greenkeeper should be able to restore a course to first class condition in two or three months." Edward Dearie, 1931

In times of budgeting and not knowing how you will get

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by, think of this: "A perfectly maintained golf course is a golf course where the man has got for every dollar he has spent a dollar's worth of goods." Hawkins, H. 1935.

Each year, the GCSAA invites you to attend the national conference weighing the benefits to you and your employer. "Your visit to Chicago the week of March 21-26 is conclusive evidence that you are keeping in step with the times." An Open Letter To Every Greenkeeper in America, John Morley, 1927.

The Midwest has offered its membership the opportunity to openly share and exchange ideas, practices and principles as it relates to the art and science of greenkeeping. "One of the best ways to get rid of some of the headaches or problems that have come along is to visit your fellow greenkeepers. I can safely say that if a man will ask a few questions and keep his eyes open, he will invariably come away with an idea which he can adapt to advantage at his own course." Hawkins, H. 1935.

The advent of our Association, based upon the principles that are still alive today, changed forever the game of golf. Like women that won't share their meatball recipe for fear of, I'm not really sure – trade secrets were the name of the game as the "old timers" guarded their turf knowledge from those entering the profession. Their experiences based upon trial and error gained them the upper hand when growing grass, setting up a golf course and maintaining conditions throughout a season. There were a number of things that converged at the time to change the practice of greenkeeping forever.

On December 24, MAGCS will celebrate its 85<sup>th</sup> year in existence. I hesitate to call it a birthday, because it wasn't really born or an anniversary because we don't celebrate it every year. I would suggest it to be a milestone that represents two key facts. One, the Midwest has been valued enough by its members to still be a viable and valuable entity and two, it has survived because its members accept and often drive progress.

Certainly, there are things that are no longer troublesome on the golf course, such as wagon ruts or large rocks sticking through the turf. (If you have one – make a fire on top of it to heat it and then douse it with water and watch it crack to pieces, learned that from Martin Rasmussen, greenkeeper from St. Paul, MN 1928.) And no one ever worried about rebooting a computer or a virus that infected records back then, but the profession is still as important and honorable to the game of golf today. To the next 85 years! **-OC**

## Citation list

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