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This report given by Donald N. Johnson
Chairman of Green Committee, Medinah Country Club
at the Chicago District Golf Association's
Annual Seminar, 1973

Memorial Tree Program

It's kind of a nice, secure feeling to be able to stand up here and offer a program to Green Committees that is almost 100% guaranteed to be a success! Not only that, but it has a definite tie-in with our subject of the day — **ecology**, because trees are recognized as a very important part of nature's life cycle — and it's Arbor Day to boot!

What I'd like to do this afternoon is share with you my experience while setting up a Memorial Tree Program at Medinah Country Club back in 1964, and the good results we've had right on through 1971. You **may** decide to do the same at your club.

Looking back at the early 1960's, I'm sure most of you will remember that we were all greatly concerned over Dutch Elm Disease, and the potential loss of hundreds of our valuable trees. Even without the help of the elm bark beetle, however, we lose many trees of various species each year for any number of reasons. So tree loss is a serious problem. I think we can also agree that trees are almost as essential to the game of golf as they are to the game of ecology. Not only are trees important to the game's strategy but they add great beauty and value to our acreage. So, all in all, I believe reforestation on our golf courses to be a prime responsibility of each golf club's Green Committee.

In spite of these facts, and the obvious need for trees on our golf courses, it seems that at budget time the original proposed figure for tree purchases is usually trimmed, (**pruned** might be a better term) in favor of more so-called "essential" items. It is **so easy** to reduce the budget proposal for trees from \$8,000 to \$4,000 or from \$4,000 to \$2,000. It was this type of budget revision experience that helped prompt me to plan our Memorial Tree Program. The first step was to obtain the support of the Golf Course Superintendent. In my case this was very easy and probably would be for all Green Committee Chairmen, even though it does mean an extra burden for the Superintendent.

These gentlemen appreciate the value and beauty of one of God's great gifts. Not only that, but they know what specie tree should go where, and how to plant and care for it. Therefore, get a promise of cooperation on your program from your Golf Course Superintendent, or forget it.

The next step was to obtain approval from my Green Committee. This was sewed up when each committee member voluntarily agreed to make an initial donation to the new program in the name of our Green Committee.

We were gaining ground, but needed the approval of our Board of Directors to get underway. Here again, no great problem was encountered, after I described the plan in detail to the Board. It was agreed that I could go ahead for one year, and then assess the results. This approval was granted in May, 1964, so we had time to plan our approach to the members. If you decide to establish a Memorial Tree Program at your Club, I suggest it be done early in the season.

Our next step was to introduce the program to our members, and plan a publicity campaign. The first word to our membership, was a little squib in our

Weekly Newsletter calling attention to the next issue of our monthly magazine. It promised a story on a new project called the Medinah Memorial Tree Program. We received good coverage and aroused quite a bit of curious interest. The actual article came out in the June issue of our Club magazine "THE CAMEL TRAIL" and read as follows:

SOMETHING NEW

A MEDINAH COUNTRY CLUB "MEMORIAL TREE" PROGRAM

The Green Committee, with Board of Directors approval, is initiating with this issue of Camel Trail, a new method for members to help our reforestation program and at the same time honor individual Medinahites!

The plan will be known as the "MEMORIAL TREE" program whereby voluntary donations from the club membership will be set aside for the sole purpose of purchasing and planting trees on our grounds in honor of Medinah members.

The program will be administered by the Green Committee and the Golf Course Superintendent who will determine the specie and size of the trees and the planting locations.

You can support this program in several ways:

1. You can contribute to the John Crews Fund. The Executive Committee started this one off with donations of \$5.00 per man.
2. You can support the Theodore Canode Fund established by the Green Committee and kicked off with donations of \$5.00 per man. (Over the years we have been fortunate in having many members willing to dedicate a good portion of their lives to improving Medinah and directing its affairs. Certainly such men were Mr. John Crews and Mr. Theodore Canode. It is fitting, therefore, that these two men be among the very first to be honored in our new program.)
3. You can also contribute from \$50.00 and up to purchase a fine tree as a personal memorial for a friend, family member or deceased loved one.

The specie and size of tree will be partially dependent on the number of dollars in each fund as of September 1, 1964 for planting this fall and winter.

Each "MEMORIAL TREE" will have a suitable plaque attached.

A financial report on each fund will be published in the Camel Trail at a later date.

We would like to continue this program with many "MEMORIAL TREES" in the years ahead so that our Medinah can be kept beautiful with the trees so badly needed.

In the next few issues of the Weekly Newsletter you will find a "MEMORIAL TREE" form to fill out.

PLEASE DO SO AND HELP YOUR MEDINAH!

Periodically we include a form in our weekly newsletter that members can fill out and mail or drop off at the Resident Secretary's office. The form lists the open funds and also provides space to establish a new fund. We keep a fund open until at least \$50.00 is collected so that we are planting good sized trees and not little sticks.

Around October 1, we freeze the funds and shortly after begin buying trees. These are all specimen trees hand-picked by our Golf Course Superintendent and a member of the Green Committee. It is time consum-

ing, but **very** rewarding. The location and specie of tree is agreed to by the Golf Course Superintendent and the Green Committee with an occasional approval from the Golf Professional if playing strategy is involved. We encourage members to recommend tree species and locations and we do our best to accommodate them, but we do retain the right of final decision. We have had no problems in this area.

To get an overall picture of where Memorial Trees have been planted and to help judge where additional trees are needed, John Jackman, our Golf Course Superintendent, locates them on a large aerial photograph of our golf course and grounds. This has been a help, also, in showing donors where their tree will be planted and to spot open areas where trees could be useful.

A detailed report is furnished the Board of Directors each year showing the name of the honored member, names of all the contributors and sums contributed, the cost of the tree, specie and planting location.. A less detailed report is printed in "The Camel Trail" each spring for the membership. I feel it is very important to make sure all contributors are recognized.

We've done some interesting things with tree locations that may seem a bit sentimental. We have trees planted in memory of husbands and wives on each side of a tee, and other pairs of trees on adjacent fairways. We've planted trees near greens where the honored members had a hole-in-one or near the spot where they expired. While this may sound a little grim and morbid, I only mention it to indicate how personal a thing the program actually is. We've also had trees planted in the name of people still living, in fact, one fellow bought a tree for himself and enjoyed it immensely!

Naturally, we have had our share of negative reaction from some members. I can remember one member indignantly asking me, "What are you trying to do—make the place into a cemetery? Oddly enough, when his wife died, he was Johnny-on-the-spot establishing a Memorial Tree Fund!

We did, however, to be less conspicuous, reduce the size of our plaques so that now all we have is this little plaque on each tree stating Memorial Tree and a name. They are fastened to the trees with stainless steel nails inserted through a coil spring. I doubt very much if anyone could find half our Memorial Trees without a map!

There are minor problems involved such as replacing the few Memorial Trees that die. We feel a responsibility here and take the replacement costs out of our general tree fund. In this way a Memorial Tree is forever!

We have planted 78 Memorial Trees in eight years. Twenty-four different species are represented, although we tend to lean toward the maples to reduce our risk. Our next most popular is the oak. The amount contributed by several hundred individuals varies from \$1.00 to \$500.00 each. The total contributions over the eight year span has been \$9,855.00 or an average of \$1,232.00 per year. From almost any viewpoint it has been successful and I recommend it to you.

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