

**THE BULL SHEET, official publication of the
MIDWEST ASSOCIATION OF GOLF COURSE
SUPERINTENDENTS.**

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President's Message

During the past few weeks, I have had the opportunity to represent the MAGCS in meetings with some of our allied associations in golf. This is a duty of the President of the MAGCS, and one I have looked forward to. I guess I wanted to find out for myself just how much integrity our profession has with those other allied associations. I must say I was pleased to find out that the level of respect we receive is very high and we are considered an important contributing force to this game. Everyone is always concerned about the recognition our profession receives or doesn't receive. It is good to know that we are held in high regard by other professions in the game of golf but can we afford to rest on our laurels? The answer of course is no. How many of our members ask themselves what it is that gets us the recognition we receive? The typical response is the way in which each individual conducts himself as a professional. Why is it then that we still see some of our members attend our monthly **professional** meetings dressed in shirts with sweaters or shirts with no ties and no jackets? Why is it that we still have people who don't pay their dues until the first meeting with a golf event comes along? Why is it that perfectly capable members of our **professional** organization can't contribute to their own **professional** newsletter? Thank goodness the majority of the MAGCS membership **does not** conduct itself in the described above. But what about those who do? What effect does this have on us as far as how we are perceived in the overall scheme of things in the game of golf? I suppose you will always have the non-conformist and some say that a few non-conformists are good for the health of the association. My only question is, if improving their professional image and their professional ability is not the driving force for them to belong our organization, what the heck are they members for? I guess there are some things this Scotch/Irishman will never understand.

Well, enough of the sour tasting things and on the brighter side. It was mentioned at the March meeting that the MAGCS is going to be purchasing a computer in the near future. The Board of Directors has spent much time going over the pros and cons of this purchase for the last two years. We have concluded that our association has grown so much in number and activity that we find we now need a much more efficient means of monitoring the day to day happenings of MAGCS. We have arrived at only one solution, purchase a computer. Our record keeping and financial bookkeeping methods will be far superior to those now in use. We also have managed our finances much closer in the past few years so the association can remain as it is, on firm financial ground. I have mentioned how much our association is growing and we must be prepared to meet the needs of that growth now and in the future.

See you at the next meeting with your coat and tie!

Roger Stewart, CGCS



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MAGCS Directors Column

Hiring an Assistant Superintendent?

by Phil Taylor, Mgr./Supt.
Sugar Creek Golf Course

Even if you are not looking to fill this important full-time position at your facility this year, we all know of the assistant's rapid turn-over rate in our profession, and the following information and guidelines may become useful to you in the future.

The first step of this employment process is to develop a time table giving each step of the process a date deadline. This will help you to avoid procrastinating or making any hasty decisions. Knowing exactly what you must have done by what time will keep you organized and also it should eliminate those unnecessary phone calls from anxious prospects.

Once the position has been officially announced (the avenues you choose to make the announcement will probably depend on the degree of expertise required in the position profile), and an acceptable number of resumes have been received, invitations can be sent to prospective candidates for interviews. Be sure to give yourself ample time on your time table to allow you to do your homework prior to each interview.

The more research you do, prior to the interview, the more productive each interview will be. Information that can be obtained prior to the interview will not only help you separate out possibles from the not possibles, but it can also give you a good starting point for asking the candidate a question you are sure he has the answer to. This will help him feel more at ease and this should be your first objective. Additional preparation should include a query sheet. You should have questions ready that cover not only the characteristics of the position the candidate is applying for, but also questions that would yield answers reflecting his or her ability to make decisions, to organize and plan, to be sensitive to people. Other areas you may wish to probe through your questioning could include communication skills as well as leadership abilities. Remember, in the formulation of your questions, you are trying to relax the candidate as well as gain as much information as possible. Avoid questions that require only a yes or no answer.

"WHAT" questions are okay for ice breakers, but WHY and HOW questions will bring out the meaty comments. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission has formulated some guidelines to follow in preparing your questions. Failure to stay within these guidelines could result in serious repercussions to you and your employer. These guidelines are as follows:

What You May Not Ask of the Applicant

1) Age; 2) Date of Birth; 3) Previous Address; 4) How Long at Present Residence; 5) Religion; 6) Name of Priest, Rabbi or Minister; 7) Father's Surname; 8) Mother's Surname; 9) Maiden Name; 10) Ages of Children; 11) How Many Children; 12) Marital Status; 13) Who Will Care for the Children; 14) Spouse's Place of Employment; 15) Spouse's Residence; 16) Parent's Residence; 17) Parent's Place of Employment; 18) Whether They Rent or Own Their Residence; 19) Loans or Financial Obligations; 20) About Wage Attachments; 21) About Personal Bankruptcies; 22) If Ever Arrested; 23) About Legal Convictions, Unless Relevant to the Job; 24) About Foreign Languages Spoken, Unless Required for the Job; 25) Race; 26) Memberships in Social Organizations; 27) Attitude Toward

Geographical Locations, Unless Required by the Job.

What the Interview May Ask of the Applicant

1) Reasons for Termination of Previous Employment; 2) About References; 3) Work Schedules; 4) Previous Work Experiences; 5) Job Related Feelings about Previous Assignments or Present Position; 6) Career Interests; 7) Job Duties; 8) Job Training; 9) Education; 10) Job Related Professional Associations; 11) About Qualifications for the Duties Related to the Job; 12) Any Other Information on the Application Related to the Position.

Although it may appear as if these Federally enforced guidelines severely hamper an interviewer, most would agree that they actually make you a better interviewer by keeping you focused on the criteria important to the proper selection of an employee.

Once you have prepared your query sheet and researched the candidate, the actual interviews may begin. Keep in mind, during the course of the interview, it is not just a question and answer period, but you are also looking to see somebody - facial expressions, body language and actions can supply valid information. Also remember, the interview process is two-way. You are seeking information about the candidate, but he also has the right to gather information about the job he is applying for, about the golf course and YOU. It is desirable to keep this two-way communication going throughout the interview, but allow time for the candidate's specific questions at the end. Among the most common mistakes interviewers make are talking too much and taking too many notes. You won't find out much about the candidate if you do all the talking. If you try to write down every word the applicant says, you will have little opportunity to listen or observe.

Upon completing the interview it is a good idea for you to record your impressions immediately while they are still fresh in your mind. Three points worth noting would include: 1) How curious was he? (note the kinds of questions he asked of you. An inquisitive person often spots trouble and initiates projects.)

2) Does he have a clear idea of what he wants to do? (you want to hire someone who is flexible because no job is exactly what a person is looking for. The less sure the applicant is about what he wants to do, the more apt he is to be dissatisfied with the job). 3) How would you sum up his personality? (sum up the applicants personality in three or four words. Use your instinct. For instance, you might write "assertive, hard working, too serious" or "personable, bright, lacking in confidence".) Now, quickly describe yourself in three or four words, then the ideal candidate for the job. How would the applicant's personality fit with yours? How close are your answers to what you are looking for?

Once you have completed the interviewing process with all your prospects, you can compare your notes and make your decisions. (sometimes call back interviews are necessary before making your final decision). According to your time table, you can then notify the successful candidate and offer the position. Be sure to notify those unsuccessful candidates from whom you received resumes that the position has been filled.

These are just a few possible guidelines you may wish to follow in your search for an Assistant Superintendent. If you are inexperienced in conducting interviews, you are likely to be as nervous as the interviewee. It may help to relax you if you simply consider the interview as a "slice of life".

The Good Old Days

by Ed Wollenberg, Gary Country Club

So many of us seem to delight in talking about the "good old days". I can remember in my early youth to hear my elders talk about previous times as being better. I know I was always excited and impressed to hear my father and his cronies eulogize their life experiences. As I grew up and attended school and studied history and learned about the generations before my time, I discovered that they may not have been the "good old days". The people on top of the heap in society in the Middle Ages was about 5%. The other 95% lived in filth and degrading poverty. They were literally slaves who, by their hard work and sacrifices, made life enjoyable and bearable for those above them on the social ladder.

We don't have to go all the way back to the Middle Ages to know that the death rate was very high during eras past. Plagues and disease wiped out entire population groups. Life was risky and uncertain and people could enjoy no definite confidence concerning the future, because they did not know whether there would be any future for them. In fact, until the present century when medical science came into its own, the death rate of the world has always been high. The exploding population, which gives us much concern today, is due more to the declining death rate than it is to the increasing birth rate. And although there has been a decrease in birth rate in recent years, there has also been an increase in the life expectancy of people.

Philologists, that is, people who study language, tell us that in the early days man didn't use a future tense when speaking or writing. Life was so uncertain that they did not say, "We will eat dinner tonight". Instead they said, "Should we be alive tonight and should there be any dinner we will eat". Today, we can be reasonably sure and expect to enjoy a future. So, would you say that the "good old days" were better?

It was in November of 1983 while attending the wedding of the daughter of a friend of mine, that my wife and I had the good fortune to sit across the table from a young superintendent and his charming wife. Needless to say the conversation soon drifted into the topic of our work and golf courses. After touching on many phases of maintenance and personal problems related to our profession, he said to me, "Eddie, you've been around a long time, were the courses better in years past?" It seems he was being told repeatedly by some of his old members, that in the "good old days" the courses were in finer condition. Well, I will try to answer this question, by past experiences, and hope that my senility is not as obvious as the person making that statement.

It was the later part of July in 1928 that I set foot on my first golf course. And now after 56 years I am finding it hard and very traumatic to be thinking about retiring from a life that has been fun, challenging, exciting and where I came into contact with so many wonderful people. I have always felt I was the luckiest person alive to be doing something that I enjoyed so much and looked forward to each and every day, and get paid for it! How many people can honestly make that statement.

In my association with golf courses over these many years, I have seen many changes which most of you will verify but probably not believe unless you are from this time era. In order to put it into some perspective I suppose it should be told categorically.

(cont'd. pg. 6)



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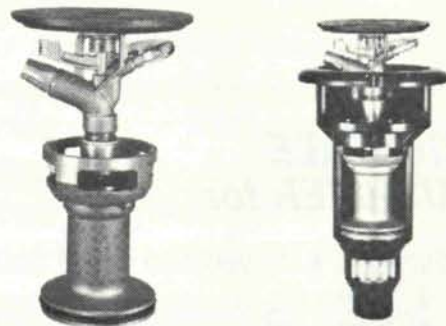
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LABOR: Prior to July of 1928 I had been working in the hay fields from sunup to sundown for \$1.00 per day. The man who paid me was the superintendent at the Olympia Fields Country Club, who I suppose was doing a little "moonlighting" on the side. Upon completion of the haying season, he came to me and offered me a job picking weeds out of the greens at the country club. My pay would be 25 cents an hour, 10 hours a day, 55 hours a week (overtime pay had not been invented yet) for a grand total of \$13.75 a week. Well, I was still going to school and my math had never been my strong point, but I was smart enough to realize this was an increase of 150% over what I had made prior to that. And I didn't have to share it with the Federal & State governments, social security, and umpteen other bureaucracy's. It was all mine.

Olympia Fields Country Club had 72 holes at that time, along with 80 to 100 acres consisting of a huge practice range area and land to take top soil from for topdressing and basement pits for the dumping of clubhouse garbage and grounds debris. The labor price ranged from 25 to 50 cents an hour, with the average about 40 cents an hour. We employed approximately 100 men, with about 20 men per course, 10 men in a "bull gang" and 10 men in the forestry crew. It was rumored that the superintendents salary was \$6000.00 a year, plus a house on the course and a Model A Ford for his conveyance. A fantastic amount.

I left the Olympia Fields Country Club in August of 1941 making 47½ cents an hour, to take a job with the U.S. Government for \$21.00 a month. After 4½ years in the service I returned and went to work as an assistant superintendent for 75 cents an hour. In 1948 I took my first job as a superintendent for the huge sum of \$3600.00. Now 36 years later I would assume the average superintendents salary is around \$30,000.00 with some making considerably more. And I'm sure it's safe to say that the average golf course laborer is making the minimum of \$3.35 to a high of \$9.00 per hour.

IRRIGATION: Early irrigation was done by a single cylinder gasoline engine pumping out of the creek. A hose system was used and usually only greens and tees were watered. The 4th course (now the North Course) at Olympia Fields Country Club was watered from fairway valves in the roughs with hose sometimes totalling 400 feet. This was connected to a traveling sprinkler giving it a wide range of 360 degree circle coverage. In the early 30's it was decided to water the fairways on the other 3 courses. I helped put in these systems. It was a center row system with quick couplers and steel pipe. All the lines were dug by hand. Trenchers, backhoes and PVC was still a manufacturers dream.

Editor's Note: Ed Wollenberg's article will be continued in the May issue. Be sure to read it for it is quite interesting.

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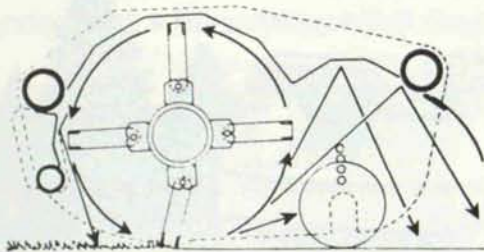
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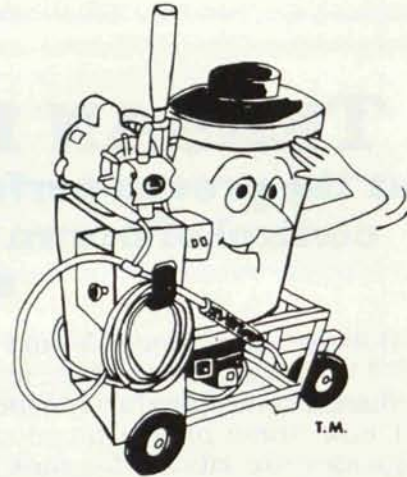
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Fairway Maintenance and Improvement — The Total Approach

by Bruce Williams

Great strides were taken during the 70's in golf course management. During that decade we saw great advances in chemicals, equipment, cultural practices, and fertilizers. The demand for golf courses increased during this period and along with it came the demand for improved playing conditions. Fast and true greens are now expected at most golf courses today. The golfer of the 80's expects only a slight variance in the greens from one golf course to another. It has become a foregone conclusion that the Golf Course Superintendent will provide a high quality putting surface.

Our eyes have now turned to the condition and playability of the fairways. Improved fairway conditions set the better courses apart from the others. This is the demand of the golfers of the 80's. Today I will try to show you some of the approaches we have taken at Bob O'Link Golf Club to improve our fairways and practices that will maintain this improved condition.

It is important to note that, when we speak of fairway maintenance, the Superintendent is usually dealing with the native soils. In many cases we have clay soils located in flood plains which drain rather poorly. We must make the best of whatever conditions the natural soil and terrain provide.


In 1977 we began a long range plan to accomplish two objectives with our fairways. The primary concern of the members was to enhance the playability of the fairways. The natural approach would be to reduce the height of cut and reduce the amount of irrigation. As we all know, this is easier said than done. The secondary concern was that of the Golf Course Superintendent in trying to keep the fairway turf alive at a reduced height of cut and on a reduced irrigation schedule. Things were already tough enough without putting additional stress on the fairway turf.

DRAINAGE — Without a good drainage network it is nearly impossible to establish and maintain good turf. At Bob O'Link, the golf course was working with the original drainage system installed in 1916. Over the years the system had been repaired, updated, and expanded but was not producing optimal results. Over a 3 year period we replaced any of the deteriorating main lines or laterals. On every fairway we installed new laterals as it was cheaper than repairing the existing laterals. Two additional men were employed during those 3 years and on the average we used 5 men on the drainage project Monday through Friday. We installed over 33,000 ft. of 4 inch perforated PVC on 14 fairways and backfilled the trenches to the surface with #5 stone. The project cost was roughly \$60,000 for labor and \$40,000 for stone and drain pipe.

IRRIGATION — The initial automatic controls for our automatic irrigation system were 15 years old and no longer reliable. Timing was erratic and our central control barely holding its own. A decision was made to convert our existing field controllers to the Toro VT 3 system and then install the compatible central control. The project was completed in less than a week and we now have accurate timing for our sprinklers. It's always nice to have a head run for 5 minutes when programmed as such rather than running for 2 minutes or sticking on a station for 60 minutes or longer. The use of solid state controllers, replacing electro-mechanical controllers, enabled

(cont'd. pg. 16)

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