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the Bull Sheet

Official publication of the MIDWEST ASSOCIATION OF GOLF COURSE SUPERINTENDENTS.

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On Course With the President

Sadly, the advent of this topic was addressed in this column all too recently. It now appears as though the summer golf season of 1994 is indeed rapidly shaping up to be a golf season of environmental confrontation and the defense of our golf courses and the manner in which we, as Superintendents, manage the materials we apply to the golf course. The environmentalists are focusing on the golf courses and those who manage them with a renewed vengeance. No matter the beauty of golf courses, no matter the recreational value of golf, no matter the sovereignty of golf's open spaces, no matter the myriad benefits of golf to the environment, these environmental critics are determined to make life miserable for anyone associated with the management of golf. These meddling know-it-alls are not content to leave well enough alone with issues of their own, they are determined to undermine virtually anything that does not serve their own self-interest. And it seems that golf courses are in clear sight of their guns.

And I guess it's not too hard to figure why ... Arguably, golf is regarded by many of the populous as an elitist pastime enjoyed by only those of considerable financial means and therefore golf is highly exclusionary. Plainly that is untrue but nevertheless golf courses then become an easy target of those who feel left out of the action and want to hurt those who so enjoy the game. Not only are they sadly and completely uninformed of the joys of the game of golf; those very same individuals (and groups too) refuse to acknowledge any benefit whatsoever of anything even remotely associated with golf. They ignore the abundance and variety of wildlife that populate our many acres of open grassy savannas. They ignore the variety and health of the plant material. They ignore the competence and care with which the golf courses and our environment is managed. They ignore everything but what serves to initiate some feeling of public panic. Simply put, these 'concerned individuals' will resort to all manner of ways to focus the public eye on the "alleged excesses" of the golf courses and those who manage them.

Nevertheless golf courses then become an easy target of those who feel left out of the action and want to hurt those who so enjoy the game.

The focus of the public eye has dramatically narrowed already this young golf season. An early May article published in "The Wall Street Journal" chronicled the alleged dangers inherent at any golf facility. The headlines screamed "Golf Courses Denounced as Health Hazards" and the article went on to list the usual dirge of issues relating to golf and the environment. Thankfully, GCSAA President Joseph G. Baidy and the GCSAA Executive Staff were quick to respond point by point to the article and it's content. But not before the WSJ article was read and discussed by millions of readers and the damage was done.

So, it looks to be an interesting season and certainly one of an intensified environmental awareness. Be ready and at your stead, the issue of the environment surrounds us and the challenges are on the way. More than ever before we are faced with defending that with which we are so intimately associated.

ATF

Director's Column

by Kerry Blatteau, CGCS

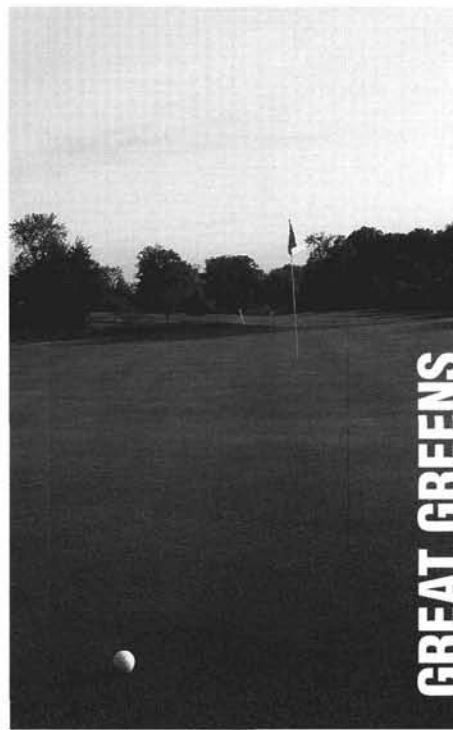
April 12. The rain has finally arrived and given me a chance to come inside and catch up on my paper log jam. Spring in Chicago — who knows what to expect. Last year it was cold and wet into May. This year it's been mild and dry. Certainly keeps you flexible, doesn't it?

I am completing my fourth year serving on the MAGCS Board of Directors and have enjoyed being chairman of the golf, membership, public relations committees. I also am presently a member of the scholarship and research committee. While learning much about the function and scope of these committees, I have also gathered some valuable insight as to the direction of our organization.

The Midwest Association of Golf Course Superintendents is no longer a small, local group. As in many past years, the MAGCS has a member serving nationally on the GCSAA Board of Directors. Our membership has grown to make us one of the largest regional associations in the country. We interact yearly with other nearby regional associations and some of the most respected collegiate turfgrass programs in the country. We co-sponsor a major 3 day turfgrass exposition as well as regional education seminars. Locally, we organize seminars and education programs pertinent to our Chicago area needs. We have one of the best hospitality rooms at the national convention. Also, we are fortunate enough to have many high quality facilities that are willing to host our monthly local meetings. Finally, we donate funds to many local and national research and scholarship programs.

To accomplish all of these things takes a well organized, planned and funded commitment, similar to running a golf course. As our organization has grown, the need to operate in a more businesslike manner has become evident. Things such as pre-registration and pre-payment for all functions, earlier planning and commitment for meeting locations, the addition of logo merchandise and the conversion to computer records are all a part of that change to a more business-like operation. While these changes may not have provided as smooth a transition as always hoped, the end result will, I think, be an improvement for the entire membership.

The present Board of Directors is as forward thinking as any I have served on and has a goal to expand our organization into the top local organization in the country. This push for excellence is only fitting for a region with the best conditioned and managed golf courses in any part of the country. I hope you, as members, will be as excited as I am about the future and the direction we are headed. The Board of Directors looks forward to your input and support to assist us in this period of advancement and progress.



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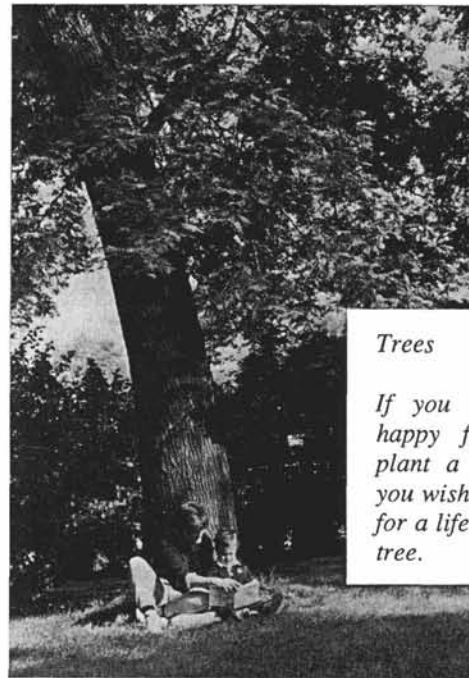
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Editor's comment: The following letter from the GCSAA, is the reply to the "The Wall Street Journal" article that appeared in the May 2 edition.

May 5, 1994
Mr. Ned Crabb
Letters to the Editor
Wall Street Journal
200 Liberty Street
New York, NY 10281



Dear Mr. Crabb:

Your publication has always led the way in debunking eco-myths (e.g., the Alar scare), so I was surprised at Timothy Noah's article on the environmental criticism that has been leveled at golf courses of late.

Instead of highlighting the remarkable efforts being made to ensure that golf courses are environmental assets for communities, the article failed to identify the underlying motivation behind the criticism, revived a questionable New York "study", and suggested that those in my profession were irresponsibly using pesticides merely to make courses green and pretty. That's unfair and here's why:

1. The great majority of the criticism directed at golf courses has been generated by local interest groups who wish to stop a particular development. We agree that communities should have the right to control their own destinies, but it often seems to be at the expense of our industry's reputation. In short, golf courses everywhere have been victimized by feverish anti-growth rhetoric in a few communities.

2. Golf course superintendents are widely recognized by the regulatory community as being among the best-educated, most judicious users of pesticides. These professionals are leading the way in the use of integrated pest management practices, high tech application systems and new generation chemicals and biological controls. As the United States Golf Association's forthcoming research report and numerous previous independent studies show, the products we use on our existing golf courses do not tend to migrate into ground or surface water — despite some dire and often undocumented claims to the contrary.

3. The report on golf course pesticide usage on Long Island issued by former New York attorney general Robert Abrams contained a great deal of alarmist language with little or no scientific documentation. It cannot be considered to be a valid representation of real-life golf course management practices.

4. The quote suggesting that golf courses are "naked" with chemicals "to get the grass looking real nice" goes to the heart of the biggest fallacy about golf course management practices — that these products are used for purely aesthetic reasons. This is simply not true. The primary reason to prevent pest damage is to ensure the playability of the course and the value of the property and the enjoyment of the game of golf. Golf courses are extremely valuable assets, both as real property and as community greenspace. They employ hundreds of thousands of people, dramatically increase the value (and therefore the tax base) of the adjacent property and provide recreational and physical fitness opportunities for more than 25 million Americans each year. In short, they are far more than just pretty playing fields.

(continued page 9)



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(GCSAA Letter continued)

5. As the author correctly noted, the study our association commissioned to gather information on causes of death among GCSAA members over the past 25 years cannot and should not be used to imply that a cause-and-effect relationship exists between occupational chemical exposure and human health. We asked the University of Iowa to conduct the study simply to establish a baseline for a long-term, in-depth study of all health and safety questions facing our current members. We are piloting that study this year. As far as the lead investigator's statement that it's a "prudent strategy" to reduce opportunities for pesticide exposure among golf course workers, we agree wholeheartedly. That's just common sense.

6. Finally, I felt that the illustration that accompanied the article (a cartoon which depicted golfers in "moonsuits") was not reflective of the content. Return to the Alar scare for a minute. The most unfortunate part of that whole unsavory story was that people stopped a very healthy activity (eating apples) because of an extremely remote health risk. Your illustration flippantly creates a perception that golfers have something to fear. Nothing in our study or any other credible scientific research indicates that golfers are at risk.

In closing, I urge any golfer who has a question related to this article to contact his or her local golf course superintendent to find out the real story. Ask your superintendent about wildlife on the course, about the realities of chemical management practices, about the course's environmental philosophies. I think golfers will find the real story much more positive than the one presented recently in these pages. I also urge the **Journal** to revisit this subject in the future and to take a much more comprehensive approach.

Sincerely,

Joseph G. Baidy, CGCS
President, GCSAA

On the Golf Course Superintendent

"The golf course superintendent is more of an artist than he realizes. I think he's tremendously important in providing the 'golf garden view' to the members as an escape from the concrete and steel that overpower us in today's world.

"He's got to do this with a budget that is often too small, with challenges that were never there before — like water shortages and environmentalists — and the guy who pulls it off has gotta be a genius.

"I think we owe him a lot more praise than he's used to getting and I know it's going to happen. I can think back to when my own profession didn't get the appreciation it deserved. The reporter was supposed to be rather devil-may-care underpaid guy and not generally given profound respect, if any at all. But times are changing. When you heap responsibilities on people you've got to give them respect, you've got to give them bucks and you've got to give them privileges.

"The television guys still haven't learned to point out the beauty of a golf course or the work that went into it, months and months. People accept the beautiful greens and fairways instinctively. I don't say the superintendent has to be interviewed at length but they can mention his name and let him share a split-billing with God!"

Herb Graffis — Reprint from May 1984

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Keepers of the Green

by Tony Rzadzki, Supt., Cantigny Golf

"Golf developers and environmentalists are engaged in a round that is affecting the future of where the game will be played. And while the outcome of this match is uncertain, it is sure to alter the course of the game."

On a recent airline trip I happened to pull a magazine out of the seat sleeve in front of me. This article appeared in the April issue of 'Hemispheres' ... a rather popular magazine produced by United Airlines. The article was entitled 'How Green Are the Greens?' and was written by A.G. Pollard. I know nothing of Mr. Pollard's credentials or qualifications, but this poignant article should be read by all golf course superintendents. His point is concise and clear. We are at war! The following are some excerpts from his article.

"Behold the typical golf course. Here is what golfers see: a green oasis of nature's peace tucked away in a busy, rushing world ... here is what environmentalists see: a piece of manufactured abomination scraped out of the natural landscape by bulldozers. A destroyer of natural habitats, and a few hundred acres maintained only by the use of toxic, horrible chemicals that kill, maim, and mutilate many of God's creatures up to and including man himself."

"Talk to any golf course architect ... and they will tell you that the environmental rules and regulations required to build a golf course have come not only incredibly complex but add millions to the cost of developing a course."

"Indeed, environmental groups, such as the Audubon Society (NOT the Audubon Society of New York State our partner in our cause), the Sierra Club, and other wildlife preservation organizations, fight the good fight before permit-approval bodies at local and state levels to protect what they see as diminishing natural buffers, wildlife habitats, and the wetlands home of birds, fish, and reptiles. All of these creatures fall prey, they claim, to the encroachment of evil golf developments."

"It is not just the physical destruction of land that environmentalists object to. It is also the chemicals that they claim are disbursed in the form of pesticides, fungicides, and herbicides; toxic formulas that can be carried by rain and irrigation runoff into lakes, ponds, and streams, killing everything in the food chain from the snail darter on up."

The line in the sand has been drawn. It is quite obvious that the environmental movement has raised it's flag and the Paul Harveys everywhere are lining up to do battle with us. Mr. Pollard continues to weigh the issues.

"So who is right? Is there a middle ground in this ongoing debate? Probably not. There is no doubt that the construction of a golf course can be environmentally disruptive. Trees must be cut down, ponds dug or emptied, earth must be moved. Yet once finished, most golf courses become — unlike other forms of development such as shopping centers, office parks, or even neighborhoods — **hospitable and benevolent environments for wildlife**. And there is no doubt that developers, golf course architects, and course superintendents are getting a lot more sophisticated about environmental concerns by coming up with ways to assuage the concerns of bird lovers."

"And golf course superintendents, the men and women on the front lines of the battle with nematodes, mole crickets, and fungi of various sorts, have learned that the old way, which

(continued page 13)

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