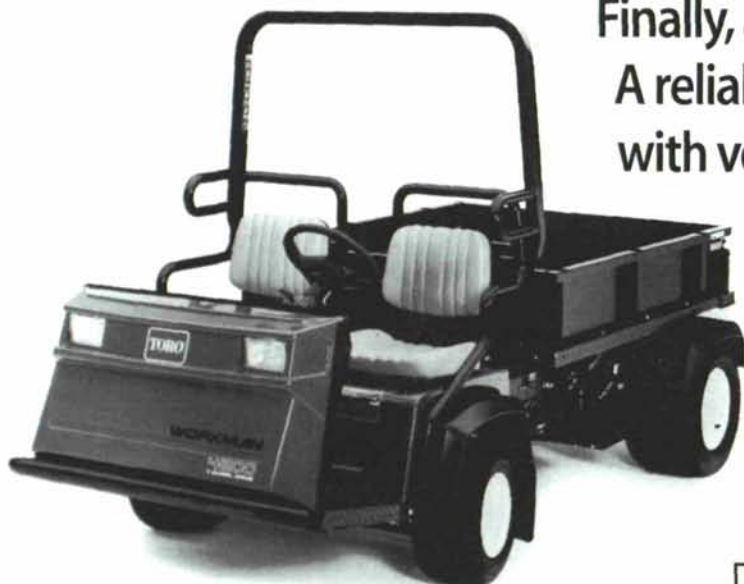


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Fred Opperman

The Midwest Association of Golf Course Superintendents (MAGCS), founded December 24, 1926, is a professional organization whose goals include preservation and dissemination of scientific and practical knowledge pertaining to golf turf maintenance.

We endeavor to increase efficiency and economic performance while improving and enhancing the individual and collective prestige of the members.

The MAGCS member is also an environmental steward. We strive to uphold and enhance our surroundings by promoting flora and fauna in every facet in a manner that is beneficial to the general public now and in the future.



Kevin Czerkies, CGCS
Sportsman's C.C.

If you've attended any GCSAA or MAGCS seminars lately, or even read any trade magazine articles, you would know that the subject matters of enhancing our communication skills and promoting the image of the profession of golf course superintendent are being preached to us constantly. They go hand in hand. I think almost all of us, in one way or another, can improve our communication and image skills.

I hate to admit this, but the golf pro, or whoever is at the pro shop counter, can indirectly affect the image of a superintendent. The image can be a bad one if the pro shop staff doesn't give the correct information to golfers' questions. Conversely, if the pro shop staff is kept abreast of what's happening on the golf course, a negative situation can be averted. Communicating with the golf pro, the club manager, and the board can enhance our image. It helps when the key staff members at a club can communicate and work as a team. Unfortunately, sometimes personalities get in the way.

It's a lot easier for the golf pros to control their own public images than the superintendents. They are right there greeting the customers. We, on the other hand, are generally out of the limelight. We're out there silently going about our jobs. It seems like the only time we're noticed is when something goes wrong. Take the 1995 weather, for example. We were the ones being brought to the surface. The Chicago area superintendents did an outstanding job of communicating with the golfers and media. We explained why many of us were experiencing turf loss, and, for the most part, the public understood. That was a classic example of using communication to promote our image as professionals. However, in parts of Illinois, as well as other areas of the country, where communication skills were lacking, jobs were lost.

The image of the golf superintendent is improving. A survey done last winter by *Golf Digest* resulted in 58 percent of the participants saying that the superintendent was the most important person at a golf course. But ask golfers the name of the golf pro and the name of the superintendent of the club they frequent the most, and I'll bet the vast majority could only name the pro, especially at public golf courses. We need to make ourselves known.

Our improving image and worth are beginning to elevate salaries. There are many superintendents making a pretty good buck, but there also are many that are struggling to make ends meet. The MAGCS employment referral service recently sent out a couple of notices for superintendents, but the salaries offered kept many from applying. These were public

clubs that are ranked among the best in the Chicago area.

Participating in various salary and benefit surveys will help communication amongst ourselves and give us ammunition when negotiating for higher wages. Just remember, without a golf course to play, golf wouldn't exist. So take pride in yourselves, the job you do, and the golf course superintendent profession.

Next month's "On Course With the President" will be written by my wife Peggy. Last year, Fred Opperman suggested that for one month each year, the president's wife could write the column. I thought it was a terrific idea, mainly because it meant that I could get out of writing one. She has the rough draft finished, and we've already been in plenty of arguments over my editing of it. So a word wisdom to the incoming president: Just let your wife write it, and don't butt in. She'll be doing you a favor by giving you a month off from your writing duties. Just sit back and watch for the mail to see what she has to say. Oh yeah, Fred, it's going to be a long one, so save plenty of room in the magazine next month.

Kevin Czerkies, CGCS
President, MAGCS

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James McNair
Orchard Valley G.C.

Spread the Word

A new golfing season has begun. We have had several months to prepare for the onslaught of ballmarks, divots, weeds and diseases. We have also had time to prepare for the social pressures of our profession. As chairman of the Long Range Planning and Public Relations Committees, my focus this year for the MAGCS has vectored towards the social aspects of our jobs.

What is our professional image? How can we enhance it? During our March meeting at Nordic Hills, our educational speaker Bobby Gee commented that GCSAA has done a rather lousy job of promoting our image. I believe she was referring to the fact that they were doing a poor job of marketing us. I agree with her to some extent. GCSAA has done a good job of helping us to be the best educated of all golf course staff members. But I don't think that they have made this known to our employers. Doesn't the golf course superintendent spend more hours in the classroom than the club manager or golf professional? Perhaps GCSAA has statistics on this and can make this fact known. If we are being better educated than other club staff members, then

let's see some promotional material touting this fact.

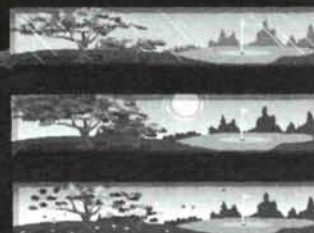
How can a positive image be projected? The avenues of public relations and recognition are a good start. Public relations is taking our message to the outside world. No "preaching to the choir" here. It is how the community and media view us. Are we the polluters responsible for groundwater contamination, or are we the naturalists that provide habitat for wildlife? How are you viewed in your community? The Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program has done a lot to give the populace a more favorable impression of us, but this is only known if we promote ourselves and make known our positive impacts on the environment. In a word, it is publicity.

The other avenue to a positive image is recognition. This is a reward that comes with respect and good publicity. We have had many MAGCS members receive recognition because of their efforts in the ACSP. Another type of recognition comes in the form of premium jobs being landed by MAGCS members. Several employers from far away have come to the Midwest to find the best in the business. The media has also recognized our efforts to humanely control the goose populations on our courses by the use

of dogs. We are being recognized by the media as the source of the impetus for the greatest improvement to putting surfaces: the spikeless shoe. We have had several superintendents that have had books published. Most recently, Brad Anderson had an article published in *Landscape Management*, and Luke Cella had an article published in *The USGA Green Section Record*. Great job, guys! We are making progress in being recognized, but there is much work left to do.

The Public Relations Committee serves to present a positive image of the MAGCS member. We have information packets that may be of value to you in contacting and dealing with the media. We can help you write a press release. Committee members are Tim Anderson, Trent Bradford, Dave Gelino, Tod Hopphan, and Mike Mumper. Help us promote our profession. Help us spread the word. ■

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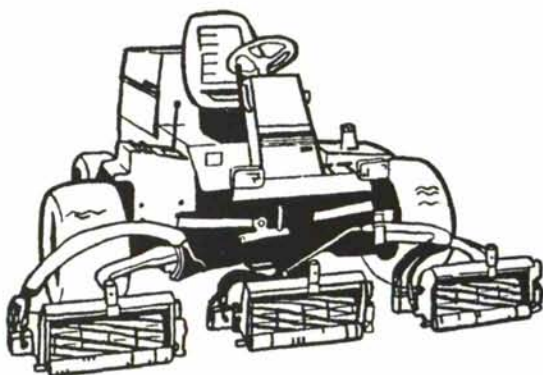
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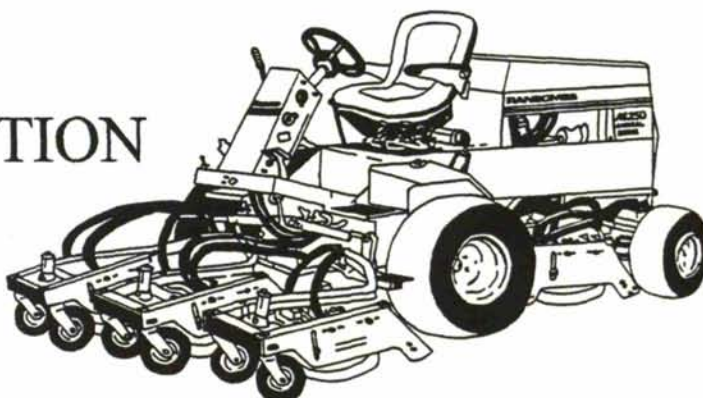
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Dan Anderson -N- Fox Valley Golf Club

Luke Cella
Pottawatomie G.C.

It all started for Dan when he was sitting in his advisor's office back in high school, as he explained, a bit hokey but true. He was looking at his options in life when he read an article by an anonymous golf course superintendent that described the profession. The written words promised Dan this vision of grandeur: The career choice for one who has a love of the outdoors and enjoys adventure that is inwardly fulfilling and, also, a low to median pay scale. At once Dan was hooked by the vision of himself becoming a part of the profession. I agreed the whole story was hokey, but Dan has succeeded in our field and has become another hero behind the scenes by providing another fine playing field for those of us who enjoy the game.

Dan has been the superintendent at FVGC for the past nine years. He gained his golf course experience as an assistant clubhouse manager at Pine Meadow C.C. for two years, golf course superintendent of the red course at Twin Orchard C.C. for a year, and also was an assistant at Pine Meadow during their reconstruction under Ted Sokolis. He also worked at the U of I, Urbana-Champaign, golf course while earning a degree in turfgrass management. Dan became certified by the CGSAA in January of 1995.

Recently, Dan has been involved with installing a pond between their 12th and 13th holes. An avid fisherman, Dan will probably try to get the pond stocked with anything that will bite his little hook. He also has been working on drainage, bunker



Dan Anderson, CGCS, superintendent of Fox Valley Golf Club.

renovation and also tee construction. Dan explains FVGC is improving every season. The most unique feature of the course is the rolling hills one would not expect to find so close to a river. The golf course also supports beautiful stands of native oaks and hickories. Dan explained to me that many American Elms were lost to Dutch elm disease, and that is why some parts of the course appear to be open. The golf course was built in the early twenties and now supports 45,000 to 50,000 rounds per year.

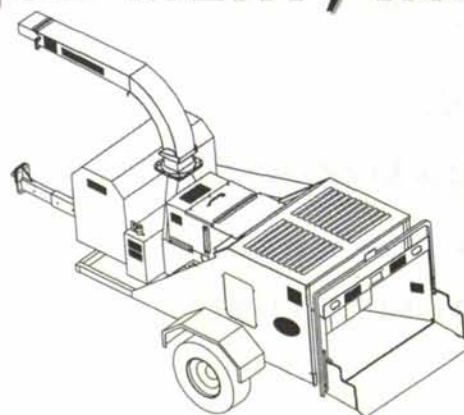
Dan is a member of the GCSAA, CGCSA, ITF and MAGCS where he serves on the Educational as well as Editorial Committees. I almost forgot, Dan is also the past secretary/treasurer of the Fox Valley Golf League

(continued on page 30)

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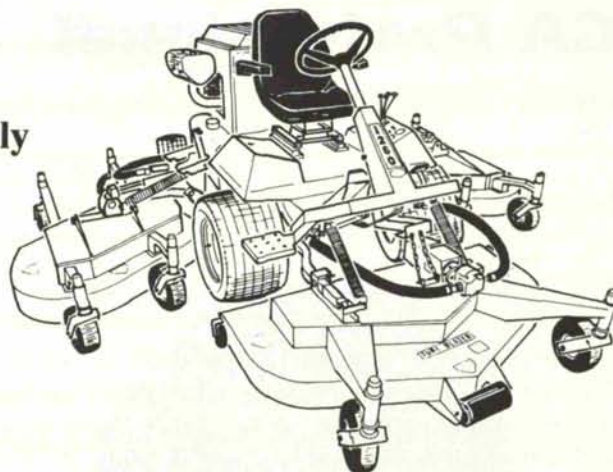
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Point of View From the Club PGA Professional

Gary Hearn
Salt Creek G.C.

I thought it would be nice to hear from the other side of the "fence": the person who interacts with the public much more than a golf course superintendent, a person who knows the "rub" of the golf course with their outstanding drives, accurate iron shots, and that super hot putter—our club PGA professional. That PGA professional that we interact with on daily basis by either playing a few holes together, coordinating a special event, or setting up the golf course for that particular day is usually a good friend that makes our job much easier. I contacted a few PGA professionals in the local area and asked them seven different questions. Here are the PGA professionals that responded:

Tony Perry, Salt Creek G.C.
Trey Van Dyke, Oak Brook G.C.
Phil Benson, Itasca C.C.

QUESTION 1 The game: What has changed?

Tony feels that the equipment has gotten better; thus, many courses are playing shorter than before, plus the addition of soft-spikes help improve play. Phil thinks that the additional play from juniors and ladies has caused more constraints on the golf course, and Trey also agrees and adds that golf is becoming a social gathering (for recreational purposes) verses being a sport. Golf is reaching out to all ages and ethnics.

QUESTION 2 Softspikes: Do you think this will be a revolutionary gimmick that will fade?

All three say NO. Phil adds that the improvement of the putting surface far outweighs the occasional slip. Tony has noticed at other golf courses where soft-spikes are mandatory that there is a much improved putting surface. Trey has a different point of view and feels that pressure from the club pros (PGA), superintendents (GCSAA), and general managers is forcing the shoe manufacturers to adhere to club guidelines. A touring PGA pro who swings aggressively might want to use steel spikes. On the Senior Tour, a person's joints are a little more fragile, thus allowing the soft-spikes to give on a swing and preventing serious injury.

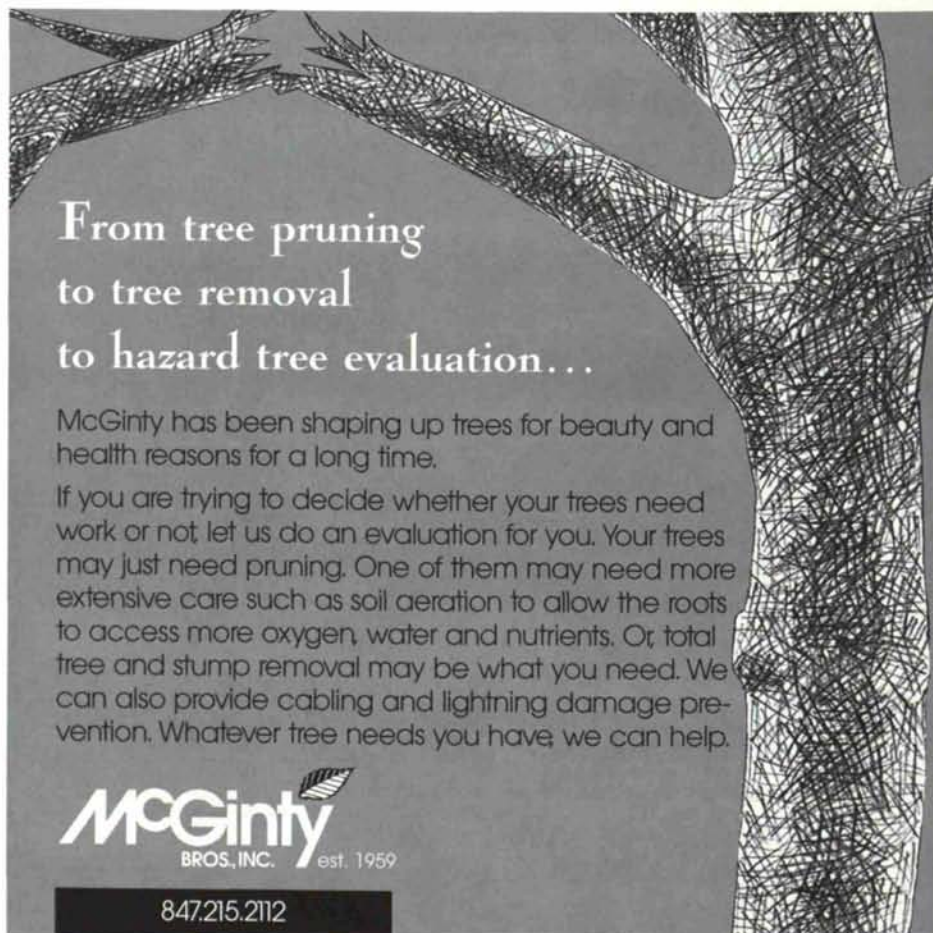
QUESTION 3 Greens: What constitutes a good green?

All three agree on holding a shot from the fairway, one that is large enough for many pin placements, is fast, holds up to reasonable traffic, and is consistent from green to green.

QUESTION 4 Approach to the green: Tough, open, blind, or rewarding?

Trey likes open approaches that give the golfer a choice from either firing at the flag or a bump-and-run shot and also the approaches that don't have to be as wide as the green. Tony feels that the ultimate course should

(continued on page 30)



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