



Henry Aaron blasts his 715th home run in 1974, erasing Babe Ruth's 39-year-old record.

ger greens afforded more pin locations so they weren't trampled to death from this surge in play. Many public 18-hole courses in this area saw rounds top 50,000 during the decade—not bad for an eight-month season. Irrigation systems improved and had to cover more areas of the course because of the increased wear. Architects had to begin designing space for cart paths, and how many superintendents learned to fit them into the existing terrain? It seemed like we were always adding drainage, tees or cart paths during the Seventies.

One aspect of the industry has remained fairly consistent since the Seventies. That is our own GCSAA chapter, the MAGCS. It is a tribute to the loyalty and love of this business demonstrated by our membership. Within the MAGCS, Illinois Lawn was the distributor of Jacobsen, Cushman, Ryan, Rogers and 54 other brand names. Toro was first distributed by George A. Davis, then later by Chicago Toro. Wally Fuch's Turf Products outgrew his garage in Wheaton and moved to County Farm Road in West Chicago. Nels

Johnson, Burdett's, Roseman Tractor, Century Rain Aid, Henry Frenzer, Clesen's, Lemont Paving, H&E Sod and Brookside Soil Testing were all in business back then and advertising in *the Bull Sheet*. BOJO was doing business in Peotone, long before any talk of a third Chicago airport there. Scotts started a Proturf division. Par Ex, Milorganite, Aqua Gro and Chipco were all part of our arsenal back then.

The MAGCS was facing some changes as well. The title "golf

course superintendent" was fast becoming the preferred moniker for our position. The first certified superintendents were recognized. Our members were very outspoken against the move of GCSAA headquarters from Chicago to Lawrence, Kansas. Ray Gerber, editor of *the Bull Sheet*, wrote a scathing editorial against it. He made sense. The move didn't. Geographical center doesn't make any sense unless you only are of a driving mentality. Ever try to fly to Lawrence? Our turf concerns were about the mysterious decline of C-15 (Toronto) greens. Several area clubs ended up rebuilding all of their greens as a result. There was a new insect pest in the mid-Seventies. *Aetenius Spretulus* had everyone wondering how they were going to keep their turf.

Then, we adapted to whatever the challenge was—as we continue to do now. Several of our concerns then are still problems now, while other concerns are certainly cyclical. *Poa*, keep it or kill it. Low-mow bluegrasses were quite the rage (Warren's A-20 and A-34) . . . not much different from today in light of the recent installations at Geneva G.C. and Phillips Park G.C. Growth retardants were coming on; now they are being perfected and widely used. Wastewater irrigation was

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"The King" dies on August 16, 1977.

being used on the North Shore of Chicago and is now the main ingredient in irrigation resources in many parts of the country. We lost DDT, but its demise has given us back the eagles, herons and egrets.

The Seventies were a decade of conservative and cautious growth. Budgets grew to keep up with the growth of the game. But so many times, they didn't keep pace with inflation of the economy. Labor budgets in the MAGCS in

the late Seventies ranged from \$95,000 to \$157,000. Superintendents salaries ranged from \$19,000 (with housing) to \$40,000 (without housing). In 1978, Medinah C.C. offered \$25,000 to \$35,000 for responsibility over three courses. Sugar Creek offered \$14,300 to \$17,500 for a nine-hole job. The city of Elgin advertised \$18,000 to \$22,200 for one nine-hole and one 18-hole course.

We worked with what we had, and didn't know anything different. As the leisure-time industry grew, so did we. The challenges of the decade made us grow as professionals. It was a ride of peaks and valleys. The trials and tribulations gave stories to tell, occasions to remember and helped us build on what we are. Yes, life is good! Ladies and gentlemen, Elvis has left the building! 

Author's note: The preceding are the ramblings of a grass-stained wretch who was fortunate enough to live most of these events in a more-or-less cognizant state. He wishes to acknowledge the 120 issues of the Bull Sheet and the 60 issues of the USGA Green Section Record for inspiration in jogging his memory. The material presented is as factual and accurate as the recollections of the author who accepts full responsibility for these proceedings and anything else that happened during the Seventies.



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My Friend and Mentor— Ray Gerber

On October 12, Ray Gerber will be inducted posthumously into the Illinois PGA's Hall of Fame. The IPGA has bestowed this distinction upon only one other superintendent. In honor of Ray's accomplishments and his outstanding character, our retired editor, Fred Opperman, offers this short memoir.



Ray Gerber.

“Fred, may I buy you a drink?”

*“To reach the top
of one’s profession
is noteworthy.
To reach the top
of one’s profession
from a humble
beginning is
exceptional.
Ray Gerber was
exceptional.”*

~Don Gerber

That remark was the start of a long and wonderful relationship with Raymond Gerber, better known by all as “Ray.” The occasion was one of our Midwest meetings, which was being held at the Cypress Inn on Ogden Avenue. It may even have been an annual meeting, now that I think back on it. The year was 1969. I had been superintendent at the Elmhurst C.C. (now Oak Meadows C.C., owned by the DuPage County Forest Preserve) for three years.

After buying me a drink, Ray asked if I would like to come over for lunch at Glen Oak C.C. sometime within the next couple of days. Well, when you are a young superintendent and a dean of superintendents asks you to come to lunch, the answer is yes! During lunch at Glen Oak, Ray said that he was going to retire and was wondering if I would be interested in his position. Again, yes!

I started at Glen Oak C.C. on May 1, 1970. It was a strange summer, that one of 1970. Ray and I both came in to work everyday. He was retiring, but the date of his retirement was never mentioned nor did either of us bring it up. He would get the crew started every morning by writing their duties on a chalkboard, but he seldom put down their second or third jobs of the day. After the crew’s first job, I would assign the subsequent jobs, but I always phrased it, “If Ray asks you to do something else, please do it and don’t worry about what I gave you to do.” After a couple weeks of both of us coming in on the weekends, Ray said one Sunday that it really seemed silly for both of us to be in, so why not rotate weekends. Can you imagine having every other weekend FREE! Once again, yes!

All during this summer of 1970, I was riding shotgun with Ray, learning the course, the manual irrigation system and the all-important drainage system. Our club's special two-day event was called "Round-Up" and was usually held in early August. The last day of "Round-Up," we locked up the shop and were walking to our cars. Ray, as he said good-bye, turned and said, "Catch." With that, he tossed me his key ring and said, "It's yours," got in his car, and left.

From that day on, I was the superintendent. The club had given Ray an honorary membership, and we had lunch together at the club everyday from then on. Although he had spent 34 years as superintendent of Glen Oak C.C., he never once questioned me on any of my practices or questioned why this or that was happening. What restraint he had to have had. But then, I really didn't deviate

much from his practices of turf care. Believe me, I consulted with him on most items and relied on him to find all of the shutoffs for the irrigation system when we had to turn on or off the old manual system, before we installed an automatic system in 1976. On days that I might be away from the course, I would ask Ray to look after the crew and asked him if I should assign jobs. The answer was always no. I'd come back to find the grapevines removed from shrubs or some other detail done that I had been putting off. They were the jobs that had been bugging him, but he never said a word about it to me. What a guy.

When Roger LaRochelle resigned as editor of *the Bull Sheet*, Ray had been retired for about two years, and I think he needed something else to do. Always active in our Association, Ray volunteered to become the editor in February of 1972. That is, after he was nomi-

nated to fill the editorship by Marv Gruening, after the suggestion of Marv by Don Gerber at our annual meeting in 1971. It was kind of full circle for Ray, for back in the mid-'40s, he, Bob Williams, Norm Johnson and Paul Burdett (Jim Burdett's father) got together and thought the Midwest needed a newsletter. And so *the Bull Sheet* had been born.

By that time, I had enlarged the office in the maintenance building, making room for a desk for Ray. It was here that he did the work on the newsletter from February 1972 to July of 1983, when he passed away.

Here are a couple of "Gerberisms" that I fondly recall:

- Comment when it was raining one day: "Large raindrops don't last." I believe we were flooded for three days after that.

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COMPOST

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- Comment during one of our lunches at the clubhouse: “Large snowflakes usually don’t amount to much.” His car was snowed in, and he couldn’t get it out of the parking lot. We hadn’t put the snowplow on yet for the season.
- “If you have four school boys working, you are paying four but only getting the work of two.”
- Again on school boys: “You can put four kids to work at four corners of the course, and in 30 minutes you will find them all together not working.”

The following biography was written by Don Gerber, president of MAGCS in 1962 and retired superintendent of Chicago Golf Club.

Raymond Gerber (1899 – 1983)

To reach the top of one’s profession is noteworthy. To reach

the top of one’s profession from a humble beginning is exceptional. Ray Gerber was exceptional.

Ray was born in 1899 on a small farm in rural Minnesota. His father had died when Ray was six years old. Ray’s formal education ended after the eighth grade because he was needed at home to help his mother run the farm.

At the age of 16, Ray spent part of the summer helping his married older sister move ranch stock from eastern South Dakota to a new ranch in western South Dakota that bordered on the Badlands. Driving cattle across the wide Missouri River on horseback was an experience he always remembered.

The next year, Ray Gerber started his career with golf courses. Woodhill Country Club in Wayzata, Minnesota, was being

constructed, and Ray drove a team of horses hauling and grading the course. He had a room over the local blacksmith shop. During the winter months, he cut large blocks of ice from the local lake using horses. The ice was then packed in sawdust in a building to be used during the summer months.

After the construction of Woodhill Country Club was completed, Ray stayed on and for the first time was exposed to the maintenance of a golf course. During this time, his exceptional aptitude for maintaining reel-type mowers attracted the attention of the Toro Company in Minneapolis. A friendship developed with Toro that would last for over 40 years.

In 1925, Ray married Julia Perry. The Toro Company may have noted that marriage was a stabilizing factor because they hired Ray to assemble and main-

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tain a shipment of Toro equipment that was to be used on a new course in New Jersey, called Pine Valley. After a year there, Julia decided that New Jersey was not like Minnesota; so they moved to Illinois. Employment at the Toro dealer in Chicago for a year found Ray longing to be back on a golf course.

He found an opportunity at the Medinah Country Club, constructing their No. 3 Course. After construction was completed, he stayed on as foreman of their No. 2 Course.

Then came the great depression of 1929. The employment of Ray and many others was terminated. For the next four years, he tried to provide for his family by sharpening reel-type mowers. Ray constructed a four-wheeled trailer using the flatbed of a Model A Ford truck to put his reel grinder on. He traveled to the golf courses in the Chicago and southern Wisconsin area, sharpening mowers.

In 1934, Ray gained employment at the Sunset Ridge Country Club in Northbrook, Illinois. In 1936, he was hired as "greenkeeper" at the Glen Oak Country Club in Glen Ellyn, Illinois, and remained at Glen Oak until his retirement 34 years later in 1970.

Before the 1950s, golf course maintenance was founded on basic agronomic principles that were being taught by only a few men. Dr. Fred Grau, O. J. Noer and Burt Musser of Penn State were but a few of them. Ray never missed an opportunity to hear their presentations. Products for the control of turfgrass diseases and weed control were almost nonexistent except for two or three disease products.

In 1946, through an association with Bob Miller of DuPont, Ray was asked to try a new prod-

Ray Gerber was always a strong advocate of education. He was constantly attending seminars and other educational meetings. His knowledge provided the basis for being able to have one of the best-maintained golf courses.

uct, 2-4-D, for weed control that had been developed by the federal government for use on airfields during World War II. One pound of this dry product per acre mixed in water and sprayed on broadleaf weeds produced results that were truly magical at that time. I know this for fact, for I was the one who applied that pink powder to our weeds. A chemical to kill weeds and not injure the turf was something to behold.

Ray Gerber was always a strong advocate of education. He was constantly attending seminars and other educational meetings. His knowledge provided the basis for being able to have one of the best-maintained golf courses. His success prompted Burt Musser to ask Ray to contribute a chapter in a book that Musser was writing, *Turfgrass Maintenance*.

Because of Ray's strong desire to learn, he was actively involved in the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America

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and the Midwest Association of Golf Course Superintendents. He was president of the Midwest three times: 1943, 1944 and 1959, and president of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America in 1950. Ray was quietly proud of the fact that from 1936 to 1983, he never missed a monthly meeting of the Midwest Association or the annual GCSAA conference.


Ray received many accolades during his lifetime and since. These are a few of the more important ones:

- 1971 Charles Bartlett Award for Public Relations
- 1975 Distinguished Service Award for the GCSAA
- 1981 Herb Graffis Special Recognition Award
- 2001 IPGA's Illinois Golf Hall of Fame


Ray also wrote articles that were published in England, Australia, Canada and around the country. By his own accounts, he was a speaker at approximately 100 programs on the local, state, national, international and university levels.

Ray remained at the top of his profession until his retirement from Glen Oak Country Club at the age of 72. However, he continued to be active in his profession by becoming the editor of the Midwest Association's newsletter, *the Bull Sheet*, until his death on July 6, 1983. He was 83 years old.

In 1983, the Midwest Association of Golf Course Superintendents created the Ray Gerber Editorial Award, an award given annually to an MAGCS superintendent for the best-written article in the MAGCS magazine, *On Course*, (formerly *the Bull Sheet*), to perpetuate the name Ray Gerber.

Ray Gerber, you should be proud. 


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the Bull Sheet

John Gurke, CGCS,
Contributing Editor

DATES TO REMEMBER

September 13 – 20 — Chicago-Area Conference on State and Federal Personnel Laws. Sites as follows: 9/13-14—Radisson Suites in Chicago; 9/17-18—Hyatt Regency Oak Brook; 9/19-20—Schaumburg Golf Club. Call 800-601-4636 to enroll.

September 17 — MAGCS monthly meeting and Annual Championship at Barrington Hills Country Club, **Mark Bobb** host.

September 24 — 2001 John Deere Championship at Boulder Ridge Country Club in Lake in the Hills, IL, **Paul Wagner** host.

September 24 – November 16 — Penn State Turfgrass and Agricultural Equipment Service Technicians Certificate Program at Penn State University, University Park, PA.

October 1 — MAGCS Scholarship Fundraiser at Geneva Golf Club, **Ed Braunsky, CGCS** host.

October 12 — Illinois PGA Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony at the Glen Club in Glenview, IL.

October 17 — ITF Fall Golf Day and MAGCS College Team Championship at Silver Lake Country Club in Orland Park, IL, **Dudley Smith** host.

First and foremost, an apology from your contributing editor (me): The cardinal rule of journalism involving checking one's resources before going to print was broken when it was reported in the August issue that **Dave Groelle** was the new superintendent at Kemper Lakes. **Dan Tully**, formerly of White Hawk Country Club, is the one to be congratulated on taking over at Kemper. My sincere apologies to both gentlemen for the error. Good luck in your new position, Dan.

Mike Mumper, CGCS at Park Ridge Country Club has been very busy lately. The club is undergoing a minor renovation, including the gassing and regrassing of greens and fairways. Methyl bromide was used on greens (after some eleventh-hour negotiations with the city regarding its use), and Basimid was the choice for fairway death (while I used the less-expensive July/August method to accomplish this). Greens will be regrassed with L 93, and fairways with Penneagle. Good luck with the project, Mike.

The hit-and-miss severe storms of early August, which ushered in a break from the stifling heat wave, did not miss MAGCS member **Brian Baker** of Simplot Partners. While driving in Naperville, Brian's truck was fairly well crushed by a large falling limb to the tune of about \$9,000. Brian came out of the ordeal like a James Bond martini—shaken, not stirred—but his truck, which was probably loaded down with Banol and seed, did not fare as well. Look for Brian and his new vehicle at a shop near you soon.

Past MAGCS president **Don Ferreri** of Seven Bridges Golf Club is a local celebrity. Don was recently seen on CLTV's "Golf Extra" getting the word out about our recent weather difficulties and how they have affected conditions in the greater Chicago area. The alert viewer may have noticed another MAGCS member making an "appearance" on the show—Brian from Evanston—who called in to ask about hand-watering. Could that have been **Brian Bossert**? Great job on informing the people who use our facilities of the many trials and tribulations we encounter, Don.

Speaking of public relations, GCSAA recently sent out very heavy boxes of complimentary booklets titled, "Get a Grip!"—a *Reader's Digest*-esque condensed version of the book by the same name. The booklet is a collection of golf jokes and anecdotes ("In golf, some people tend to get confused with all the numbers—they shoot a six, yell 'fore,' and write five." and "If you have regripped your golf ball retriever more than once, you might question if this game is really for you" are but a couple of the ditties) with an introduction from Tommy Witt, CGCS, president of GCSAA and Jack Connelly, president of the PGA of America. These booklets are a big hit in the pro shop where they are given out to anyone desiring a copy—nice touch by GCSAA. (I wonder what it cost to mail all these things out?)

Congratulations also to **Steve Cook, CGCS** of Oakland Hills C.C. in Michigan, who recently attained the title of Master Greenkeeper through the British and International Golf Greenkeepers Association (BIGGA). Steve is one of only 12 Americans to hold the prestigious title (at the time of this writing, and according to BIGGA's Web site).

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