

# Responses to April Editorial

The Toro Company  
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Mr. Dan Jones  
Editor  
South Florida Green

Dear Dan:

I've just read your thoughtful editorial in the April issue of "South Florida Green." My congratulations!

You obviously have touched on a subject that is vital to future high quality care and maintenance of golf courses and other turf facilities. No doubt our service department (as well as Jacobsen's) may take exception to your comment that we have "let the golf industry down." For, in fact, both have training schools and during the past several years have made substantial progress in training distributor service personnel and in many cases, superintendents and turf students. Our group have plans for expanding this activity and they will, no doubt, apprise you of these plans.

An area which you did not touch upon, but which needs to be pointed up, is that of potential trainees. There is, I believe, a major problem of locating individuals receptive to training. Perhaps the problem may be one of making the potential trainee *aware* of the opportunity. Not unlike the situation with potential superintendents two or three decades ago. In the early to mid 50's when the problem of "too few qualified superintendents" was recognized, GCSAA responded. The name of the organization was changed, benefits, advantages and compensation — job benefits — were promoted. And, scholarship programs were set up. Then, the educational institutions responded. You know the result.

The lack of candidates may be another manifestation of the antipathy many of our young people seem to have for the trades. Or, it may be a lack of knowledge with respect to the job benefits, or just insufficient motivation at the junior high and high school level; or, a combination of these and other reasons. But, whatever the case, in order to solve the problem the entire turf industry must work together to develop programs that will alleviate the current problem.

Perhaps the golf course superintendents association at the state and national level could assume leadership in this area. For example, why not scholarships for mechanics as well as (or perhaps even in place of) the current scholarship programs for turf students? As far as I know, Lake City is the only school directing efforts specifically toward training of mechanics. However, many of the vocational schools have small engine maintenance courses. These could be expanded to include mechanic training for other areas if the need is recognized.

Once trained, holding on to a good mechanic becomes a challenge to the superintendent because of the potentially higher paying opportunities in the automotive and related

areas. But, first let's find the trainee and work together to solve the problem. Thank you again for your usual thoughtful approach to a real problem.

Warm regards,  
Jim

James R. Watson  
Vice President

Dear Mr. Jones:

I recently read the editorial in *The South Florida Green* magazine dated April, 1980, regarding training for golf course mechanics.

The Toro Company agrees with your editorial comments regarding the need for trained, qualified golf course mechanics. As recently as just this past April, The Toro Company's training teams spent two weeks at Lake City Community College participating with the training of future mechanics and future turf grass managers. Toro had a similar session in the fall of 1979 at Lake City Community College. The subjects covered were hydraulics, hydrostatics, basic electrical troubleshooting, reel and rotary mower theory and sharpening techniques. The Toro Commercial Products Distributors for Florida were also involved in these in depth sessions. Zan Equipment, Hector Turf and Gulf Shore Turf Supply had customer mechanics attend the second week of training at Lake City Community College.

The Toro Company is committed to training our market place personnel. The training efforts are top priority, to include a separate training department in the Commercial Products Division, a factory training center, and a long term commitment to support our customers product education needs. In the past three years, Toro has introduced many training and troubleshooting manuals to support our commercial customer, such as:

1. Hydraulic Test and Troubleshooting.
2. Sharpening and Adjustment Procedure for Reel and Rotary Mowers.
3. Maintenance Clocks for scheduled maintenance of Toro Commercial Products.
4. Accessory Manual for Commercial Products.

Mr. Jones, this is just the start of the training effort by The Toro Company. The results of technical product training, Distributor Personnel training, and customer education is a long term project and hopefully the results will benefit you and all other Turf Management personnel, mechanics, etc.

If I, or our Commercial Distributors may be of any assistance to you, please don't hesitate to call.

Sincerely,

Chuck Alsdurf  
Manager, Commercial Service  
Commercial Products Division

Mr. Chuck Alsdorf  
The Toro Company  
8111 Lyndale Avenue South  
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55420

Dear Chuck,

The Toro Training School sponsored by Toro and Zaun, and conducted at Lake City Community College this past April was an overwhelming success. Your training team of Dale Atkinson, Mike Bina, Tom Dooley and Fred Greening was outstanding. They represented Toro in a most professional image with their classroom and shop presentations. You would have been extremely proud of them.

This type of presentation will not only help our students to better understand your products but will greatly benefit those "front-line" mechanics in the field who are going to determine the future of golf course maintenance as we know it today.

If it is at all possible and economically feasible to continue this type of session on an annual basis, we would welcome this type of industry relationship.

Thanks for your part in making this happen. Your continued interest and support of our program is very much appreciated.

Sincerely,

Jerry H. Cheesman, Director  
School of Golf Course Operations  
Lake City Community College

Edgar (Ed) Combest, Instructor  
School of Golf Course Equipment Mechanics  
Lake City Community College

## Interview With

# Jerry Cheesman

By DAVID BAILEY

Lake City Community College is the leading higher level institution in the state for producing golf course superintendents. It is also nationally recognized for its School of Golf Course Equipment Mechanics. Jerry Cheesman, director of Golf Course Operations, discusses the following issues.

### *What is your enrollment policy?*

Cheesman: We accept 40 students per year. We would like to have 20 with a turf emphasis and 20 for mechanics. We do not fill our quota of mechanical students. Thus we fill the remaining openings with turf students.

### *How many mechanical students apply?*

Cheesman: Generally about 10. Here is the major problem. That total itself is too small and probably six of the 10 will

switch to the turf program after one year. So we actually produce only around four mechanics per year.

### *There is a separate mechanical program?*

Cheesman: Yes, we give a certificate for mechanics only.

### *Do all golf operation students take mechanics?*

Cheesman: Yes, all turf students do. The program is for two semesters. Landscape students do not take this program. Some of our early turf students did not have the mechanical exposure and have come back after graduation to receive this important knowledge.

### *How can the college overcome the mechanical recruiting problem?*

Cheesman: We need to recruit at the high school level more "mechanic shop" oriented people. We need to work the leading vocational schools for this student. We do not need a strong scholastic oriented student. Lake City needs to place advertisements in high school journals targeted to make this student aware of us and the job being done here.

### *How can the superintendents help?*

Cheesman: Local and national associations tell us they need mechanics. It's rated the top problem in the field. I challenge the associations themselves to work the local schools. Inform students there is a program at Lake City and a good job when they leave Lake City. Superintendents are good salesmen at budget time. The mechanic's image, position and salary must be upgraded to keep trained people in the business.

### *How should local associations recruit at the local high schools?*

Cheesman: Send good speaking superintendents to the schools with appointments arranged ahead with the principal and shop instructor. Show quality slides of the beauty of a golf course, the equipment to be worked, and stress the dependable job status and importance. We can no longer have underpaid mechanics and then wonder why we have a problem. Go for the top mechanical students and count on paying them just that way!

### *Tell about Lake City's facility for mechanics.*

Cheesman: We have as good a staff as there is in the country. We have an excellent shop with over \$250,000 in equipment and parts inventory. If you want to learn about golf course mechanics this is the place to come.

### *If a golf club wanted to send a mechanical student to Lake City what would it cost and what is the time factor?*

Cheesman: Total housing, school meals, fees, and books will cost about \$2,500. The time span would be from August to July for a mechanics certificate.

### *What do you see in the future for golf course mechanics?*

Cheesman: The age of hydraulics makes the mechanic even more important. The technical knowledge must be there and applied daily. In the future the equipment will have computer analysis. This will tell the exact problem. Ten years from today the mechanic will need equipment and knowledge we do not now have. We must have progressive people for these times.