



# Palm Beach Trade Winds



By MICHAEL BAILEY  
Boca Greens Country Club

## The Midnight Shift

The following is a true story. Nothing has been exaggerated. The point of this situation is to acknowledge the fact that this peculiar incident could probably happen to anyone of us tonight. Unless you are quite confident that your maintenance building is well secured, you just might experience the same nightmare.

I am deep into a sleep at 2:00 a.m. on Monday morning and I hear the phone ring. You can figure on either of two situations. It's your best friend playing a prank on you by calling to ask you what brand of wiper blades you use on your car, or it's something serious, like the police calling to notify you of an emergency. Unfortunately, the latter is correct. In some what of a daze, I hear an officer say, "Mr. Bailey, we need you to come down to the maintenance building because there has been a break-in and some of the equipment has been stolen." Within the half hour, I drive up the road to the complex only to be so bewildered to view a building that normally services a 36-hole golf course to be virtually empty! Equipment is parked all over the place as if someone said, "Let's make this place look like a junkyard." Still being dark and in the middle of the night, the police begin to try and assess the situation. The only lead into the beginning of this fiasco is the fact that a police officer in the nearby town observed at midnight "an agricultural machine clanging down the middle of main street without any headlights on." Because of such a violation, the person was stopped, whereupon further questioning concluded the machine was hot. It all began to add up. This guy was the culprit of breaking and entering, possession of stolen property and who knows what else. I was requested to drive up the road and see if in fact, this was part of my equipment. As I pulled up to the machine, the headlights of the truck revealed what used to be a 7 gang Fairway mower laid out in the mowing position. After having mowed 8 miles of asphalt, now it's official, "blacktop actually is harder in density than turfgrass!" Most of the reels were either totally missing or so severely abused that only we in the turfgrass industry would still be able to recognize the scrap metal.

By now, dawn is beginning to break, so it's best to head back to the course and see what's still salvageable. The building is completely cleaned out except for a few tractors and other various machines that fortunately had dead batteries and the jumper cables were nowhere to be found. An extremely peculiar situation was still plaguing my mind. How many individuals were involved, when did all of this begin and where in the world is the rest of

the equipment? An investigation revealed the fact that only one person was involved with this whole incident. Evidently, the person broke into the building before sunset. He then put on a company uniform found within the lunchroom. Eyewitnesses were unaware of any such problems. The golfers simply observed what appeared to be the mechanic moving and working on equipment as preparing for the next week's work. Now that the damage was done, the next goal was to locate all of the equipment, bring back to the shop and evaluate, and then determine what was deemed fit to be used for today's crew. Much of the equipment was simply driven around as joy rides. Since most of the equipment was extremely low on fuel, from all of Friday's work, most of the equipment was found within a matter of a few holes from the building. Much of the equipment must have been found to be boring or frustrating to drive. The greensmowers and Sandpros were driven just a few hundred yards and then abandoned. Such was not the case however for a few of the other pieces. A golf cart tire path of dew tracks revealed circles within the 18th fairway, whereupon either the cart drove across the lake, or it lies deep below the surface. A few hours later, the diver concluded my second guess to be true.

The pick-up truck was found out on the back nine complete with 6 flymos in the back (an ambitious lad I would say). A couple of the tractors were found just at the lake bank's edge, some machines stuck in sand traps, and two mowers driven into trees, however the most irritating (but what can now be reflected upon as the most humorous) a Parkmaster parked smack dab in the middle of #7 green, with all seven reels laid out, but stalled, because of the lack of diesel fuel. When was the last time you tried to air bleed a diesel fairway mower atop a green? If this should ever happen to you, about the only thing one can do is set out some plastic underneath the engine and bleed it off until the engine catches. At first I thought of simply pulling the Parkmaster off of the green, however since all the reels were laid out and the green was totally surrounded by sand traps, it seemed evident the only procedure was to simply bleed off the engine until the diesel catches. Once the engine fires and will maintain idle, casually lift the reels into the transport position, let the clutch out slowly and drive off the green and say, "No, I'm not weird, this is the only way to mow."

After eight hours of temper and frustration, it is now noontime. After lunch (what now seems like dinner), the crew begins to take out various pieces of equipment that have been evaluated by the mechanics to be deemed fit

(continued on page 50)

(continued from page 49)

to take back out onto the course.

The only place left to sit down and feel at home was at my office desk — wrong. Even here, I was hit. The office was a complete shambles (now I know what it's really like to keep a messy office). Anything of materialistic value was gone, however fortunately valuable records and various paper work were left; only problem, I just had to find it amongst the piles of paper.

By 4:00 p.m., the end of the day for a "typical Monday" proved to be an experience that I shall never forget.

There was really very little one could do except to think back and say, if only.....the building had a burglar alarm system, interconnected to either the police or a monitoring service. Perhaps a roving guard patrolling the building on a nightly route would have been nice too, but these are all ifs.....

Most golf course maintenance buildings are built on the extreme corner, out of view locations of the course which makes them easy for prey. The building represents a tremendous value of money, but it is only situations like this, that will convince owners to invest upon an efficient burglar alarm system that will secure all until the next day's work.

Sure all is insured and assuming the vendors have all of the machinery in inventory, theoretically this would be an easy way to get new equipment, but we all know this is not the case. Be glad for what you have and hold onto it as if it were worth a million bucks, because after all, it just about is. ■

# Suncoast Sponsors First Benefit Tournament


The Suncoast Golf Course Superintendent's Association is proud to announce the success of its Third Annual Suncoast Scramble Tournament held March 26, 1985. The event benefits local Sara-Manatee Junior Golf, Research Fund for Florida Turf-Grass Association and Scholarship Fund.

A full field of superintendents, club managers, golf professionals and suppliers enjoyed a great day of golf which was enhanced by the beautiful surroundings of the Lakes course of Palm-Aire in Sarasota. Superintendent Jim Larner and crew had the course in excellent condition for the tournament.

The team from River Wilderness came away victorious with a 60.

Through sales of "hole" sponsorships the event raised \$1,000 for local junior golf and \$1,000 for turf research. Both figures were up from previous years. Each year the tournament has grown in size and support.

Hugh Bebout of Sarasota Country Club should be commended for his fine efforts as Tournament Director. ■




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