

From Greenskeeper to Superintendent

by Lana Shevlin

It's rather insulting to refer to today's superintendent as a greenskeeper, for they do far more than just keep the greens. The profession of golf course superintendent has come a long way from the horse-drawn mowers and maintenance barns of years past. Today's equipment is specialized and constantly being updated. The equipment of the trade is not only the various mowers and equipment used to beautifully manicure the course, but often times it also includes Hi-Tech computers used in every aspect of skillfully running the golf course. Budgeting and weather tracking are only two of the areas in which computers help to advance the profession. Budgeting requires both business and financial knowledge — knowing where and how to spend the money budgeted to you for maintaining your course to the degree of excellence demanded today.

The maintenance barn is now a well equipped and functional building for the storage and maintenance of machinery as well as offices for management and employee areas such as locker rooms and lunch facilities.

The golf course superintendent is a part of the whole management team that runs the golf course and club. He has gained the respect of the membership, since through his knowledge they will be provided with not only a more pleasurable course upon which to play, but also for many a more attractive and progressive place in which to live.

The professionalism is passed down from the superintendent to his employees. Professionalism is transmitted in many ways: attitude, appearance, and respect for a job well done.

The golf course superintendent, through group associations such as The Golf Course Superintendents of America, has a voice in the betterment of his occupation. Through interaction with other golf course superintendents, he can compare his problems, share his results and come to many profitable conclusions. The seminars and courses provided from time to time help keep the superintendent abreast of new developments in his field, whether it be new and better machinery or newly developed products.

The irrigation systems of today are a far cry from the manual systems of yesterday. The pump house with its computer-controlled automatic watering system presents yet another learning experience for the superintendent. Placement, installation, maintenance and repair of the irrigation system are all of prime importance.

Safety is certainly not an area to be taken lightly. The

machinery is not only very expensive, but can be dangerous if not operated correctly. The superintendent must see to it that anyone operating machinery is well trained, made aware of precautions to be taken, and has a definite respect for the machinery.

With today's widespread availability of efficacious pesticides, protection for its applicators must be observed. Since there are three ways in which pesticides enter the body — inhalation, consumption and absorption, protective clothing is a must. We have become an environmentally aware people and in this profession, a *little* knowledge can be very harmful. Therefore, keeping up with licenses and educating employees on the effects of chemicals to themselves and the environment is a top priority.

Since the superintendent is probably his own worst critic, being knowledgeable about the game of golf itself is helpful to him. Although playing golf can be frustrating at times, this is a definite fringe benefit of the job. Next to talking about equipment, grass and mole crickets, I don't know a superintendent who can't talk at length on why he missed that putt! This is another way in which the interaction with fellow superintendents is very helpful because while playing each other's courses you can get a different view of the job.

The professionalism among superintendents is very important. When you can unify as a group, you can overcome obstacles much more quickly.

As you enter many of our fine golf courses, your first impression is made as you pass through the beautifully landscaped entry way. The breathtaking colors and placement of the flowers are a sign of the attentive professionalism reflected on the entire golf course.

Not only is the golf course superintendent constantly upgrading his own education through seminars, courses and periodicals, he sees to it that interested employees are aware of ways to become more knowledgeable in their field, and in return advance themselves in the profession. The superintendent's associations also provide scholarships to deserving young people to go to college so that they can get a good start on the road to a profession that has and still is changing for the better.

Through this ongoing search for knowledge comes the professionalism we now have among the golf course superintendent and his staff. After all, Webster defines professionalism as something done very well. ■