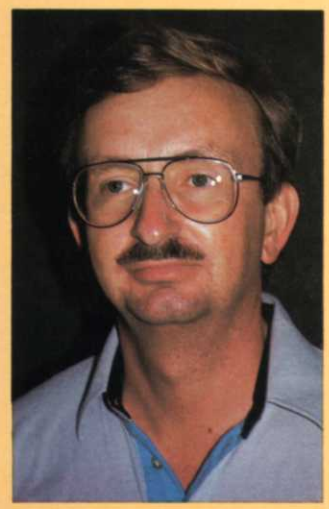
Not everybody can be the head superintendent



Mike Bailey
Golf Course Superintendent
The Falls CC
Lake Worth

Last year, one of my assistants quit, leaving me high and dry, because he realized he would not become the superintendent within the next year.

He wasn't satisfied with his "second-level" position.

Does every person entering the golf course maintenance career field need to become the superintendent?

What's wrong with becoming a career equipment manager, spray or irrigation technician or, for that matter, a *career assistant* superintendent?

Sadly, our society looks upon those jobs as "second level" and most golf courses give second-level pay and prestige to the people who fill them. And that's a shame because those are the jobs that the industry desperately needs filled.

A golf course maintenance department might employ six people or 60, but in each case, only one of them is the superintendent. Yet each job is important.

Not everybody can become a superintendent or a doctor or a lawyer.

Clare Huxtable, who is a lawyer on television's "The Cosby Show," told son Theo that he didn't have to become a professional like his parents. Instead, she said, "Grow up and become as good as you can at whatever you choose. Just make sure you are the best at whatever you become."

But the message isn't getting through.

When I interview employees, I often ask, "Where do you want to be in two to five years?"

Usually, no matter what job they are applying for, they will say, "Sitting behind your desk as the golf course superintendent!"

Ridiculous!

In most cases, the applicant has little or no training in agronomy, no management skills, not a clue about budgeting, but he honestly thinks he deserves a shot at running the whole show.

On the other hand, it is understandable that a person who has just spent two to four years in college training to be a golf course superintendent should aspire to the job he has trained for, but it isn't realistic.

There aren't that many superintendent jobs open. I'm sure we all know at least 10 good assistants who are qualified to move on, but the jobs just aren't there.

We have a glut of college-educated golf course managers on the job market right now while a number of other important golf course maintenance jobs are going unfilled because those highly-trained individuals find them "demeaning."

Who's at fault here?

Everybody and nobody.

But let's point some fingers, anyway, starting with the society which imbued my generation with the notion that everyone could — and therefore *should* — go to college. Jobs which don't require a college education became less desirable. . . or even *un*desirable

And then there are the universities, which are currently painting a beautiful picture of the superintendent's post, pumping in those high aspirations.

Granted, the top graduates will make their way to the top of the ladder, but what about the others?

They will have acquired an education worth tens of thousands of dollars and will be capable of performing effectively as assistants and technicians but they won't be satisfied because they have been told since childhood to seek only the top job.

If our assistant were to leave today, I could screen dozens of qualified applicants tomorrow.

But what about the mechanic or spray technician?

I would love to find a college-educated person who would bring a professional approach to the position of equipment manager, pesticide manager or irrigation technician. And I am certain I could convince my employer to offer compensation and benefits commensurate with the qualifications — particularly if the applicant indicated a desire to stay in that position.

And those positions are available. Today. Everywhere.

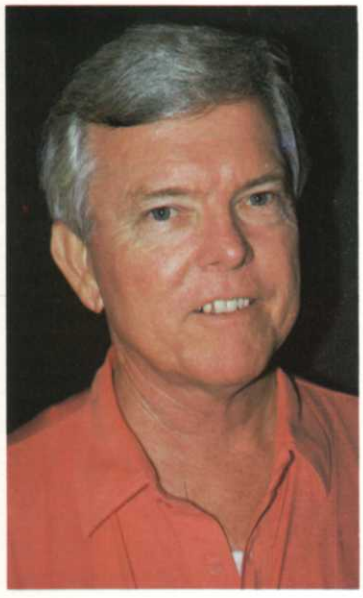
At our professional meetings, a recurring question is, "Hey, do you know of a good mechanic or spray tech?"

Educators need to be aware of the positions that are actually open and students should be guided toward training for and seeking those jobs.

We have enough chiefs. What we need are some Indians with professional feathers in their caps.

'Germ warfare' against the mole cricket appears to be working

It's still too early to tell about the red-eyed fly



Golf Course Manager
Banyan Golf Club
West Palm Beach

As we reported last quarter, a new arsenal has been unveiled in Florida to help fight the state's number-one golf-course pest, the mole cricket. A red-eyed fly and a prolific nematode are joining forces with turf professionals to try to bring mole crickets under control.

J. Howard Frank and J. Patrick Parkman, entomologists from The University of Florida, are spearheading this experimental program. Funding is being provided by The Florida Turfgrass Association. Each of the 30 golf courses participating in the project has paid the FTGA $8,000.

In late January, a three-hour seminar was held to teach each golf course superintendent how to run the program.

The parasitic nematode project consists of two 3-foot funnels, a million nematodes and two electronic "callers" which imitate the mating calls of the male tawny and southern mole crickets.

The nematodes are placed in the ground under the funnels.

When the female mole cricket comes to the mating call of the male, she falls through the funnel to the ground. She burrows into the ground and a nematode enters her body through a breathing port or through the mouth.

The nematode releases a very specialized bacteria which kills the mole cricket. The nematode lays 50,000 eggs inside the mole cricket and lives off the decaying carcass and the bacteria.

Dr. Parkman came to Banyan GC in mid February to install our callers and deposit the nematodes into the ground. We started to see activity under the funnels the next day.

A serious problem developed on the third night when the local armadillo population discovered a new restaurant. The grass under the funnels was really torn up so to protect the mole crickets and nematodes, we had to put a fence around the funnels and callers.

By the fifth day, rumors were rampant around the clubhouse about the mole cricket experiment site, which was located next to the 10th green. The best one was that the apparatus was a spaceship.

We had a sign made: *Mole Cricket Research by the University of Florida*. The rumors have abated.

After four weeks, we have had so much mole cricket activity under the funnels that almost all the grass is gone. Weeds are sprouting everywhere. And for this experiment, that is good.

So far, I believe the experiment site at Banyan has been successful in attracting the mole crickets to the nematodes. Now I hope the process spreads throughout the entire golf course.

The red-eyed fly is also a host-specific organism for the mole cricket.

It seeks the mole cricket out at night and lays an egg on its abdomen. The resulting larva then proceeds to eat the mole cricket until the cricket dies. The larva emerges as an adult and seeks out another mole cricket and the cycle repeats itself. Fifty red-eye flies are to be deposited at each participating golf course.

There is hope that, with these latest weapons, the mole cricket will eventually go the way of the dinosaur.

The twin funnels and mole-cricket callers shown here off the 10th green at Banyan GC in West Palm Beach may someday become as common a sight on golf courses in the South as ball-washers. More photos of the installation on next page.

FTGA-funded mole cricket control research project

Participating Golf Courses

Sun City Center Golf Courses
Sun City Center

Cypress Run CC
Tarpon Springs

City of Ocala Golf Courses
Ocala

Interlachen CC
Winter Park

Citrus Hills GC
Hernando

Quail Ridge GC
Spring Hill

Woodfield CC
Boca Raton

Tournament Players Club
Ponte Vedra

Silver Oaks GC
Zephyrhills

Countryside CC
Clearwater

Cypress Creek CC
Orlando

Riviera CC
Ormond Beach

Riviera GC
Naples

Fiddlesticks CC
Fort Myers

The Bay Hill Club
Orlando

Royal Poinciana GC
Naples

Banyan GC
West Palm Beach

North Dale CC
Tampa

Foxfire GC
Sarasota

DAN JONES

Drs. Howard Frank, left, and Pat Parkman of the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences assemble the two funnels and mole cricket callers off the 10th green at Banyan GC in West Palm Beach. A million nematodes get watered into the ground beneath the funnels, right. The electronic callers entice the mole crickets into the funnels, from which they drop straight onto the nematode-infested turf. The crickets burrow into the ground beneath the funnels and are attacked by the nematodes, which carry bacteria that are lethal specifically to the mole crickets. The nematode-bacteria combination is a natural enemy of the mole cricket in its native South America.

Thanks for outstanding support of research efforts

Congratulations to both of you!

I, like so many others who have known each of you for several years, know that even before Irene was named assistant editor, she was actively involved in the editorship from day one. As editors, the two of you have certainly provided 16 long, hard years of outstanding service to the Florida Golf Course Superintendents Association and to the whole turf industry.

Dan, you've always been the ideal superintendent to me. You do an excellent job of managing grass and people, two components to find a better way to accomplish your goals.

For this I am most grateful since you always went out of your way to assist researchers in their efforts to find a better way.

As a researcher in Florida for 14 years, you were one of my most valued assets; I could always count on you to help me out, whether it was making a needed contact or providing space or equipment.

I may be a Texan now, but I still feel very close to the Florida turfgrass industry and am very proud of its accomplishments and I am proud to have been a part of your industry. You have helped to make many of these milestones happen and you should feel proud.

Best of luck in your retirement from The Florida Green; we all know you haven't become inactive.

James A Reinert
Resident Director of Research
Texas A&M University Research Center
Dallas