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The St. Louis Convention

ANN MANHEIMER

That St. Louis is centrally located is well known; that it houses a new and, by most reports, excellent convention center is also widely recognized; that it is the home of the Gateway Arch, the third-most-attended man-made attraction in the United States, likewise is no secret. Nevertheless, according to meeting planner Sylvia Rottman, the city is still a surprise.

"They call it 'surprising St. Louis,' and it really is," testifies the administrative assistant of meeting services for the 28,000-member Association of Operating Room Nurses, which held its March 1979 convention in St. Louis. "Perhaps because St. Louis does not sound like an exotic location, I did not expect to like the city. But when I arrived for our first planning meeting, I noticed that parts of the countryside resembled areas of France, with its green grass and rolling hillsides. The Mississippi River makes it even more exciting." During the meeting itself, she met with more pleasant surprises: "The people and the city itself contributed to the success of our convention. The citizens were very willing to please and seemed happy we were there. Cabdrivers were extremely polite, and the staffs in all the hotels we used — from management down to service personnel — were very helpful. We have not received more cooperation anywhere than we did in St. Louis."

Jerry Bedford, Director of Convention Promotion for the Convention and Vis-

itors Bureau of Greater St. Louis, outlines what he sees as the major reasons for selecting St. Louis as a convention site: "First, we are in the center of the country, which is particularly important during the current energy crunch. Second, we house a number of Fortune 500 companies, which makes it easier for local members of many associations to become involved in national conventions. Moreover, we have an excellent convention center as well as several good hotels. And we are planning additions in both the downtown area and in St. Louis County.

"From another point of view, it is important to ask where the convention attendee stops and the tourist starts — the answer is as soon as he walks out the door of his hotel. St. Louis has certainly proved itself to be a good tourist attraction. More than five million people visit each year, a great percentage of whom are attracted by the arch, which has become a real symbol of the West."

Attracting Conventions

Such sites have been drawing conventions to St. Louis in increasing numbers. According to Bedford, the city hosted 286 conventions in 1973 for a gross value of \$40 million; in 1978, it hosted 494 conventions for a gross value of \$98 million. The latter figure might have been even greater, he notes, were it not for the current boycott of states that have not ratified the Equal Rights Amendment. "To say that the boycott has not hurt us would be untrue. While the actual cancellation of confirmed meetings has been minimal, we have had a number of tentative agree-

ments on the books that were canceled because Missouri has not ratified the ERA. And there is no way of knowing how many associations might have considered St. Louis were it not for the boycott." Nevertheless, he is optimistic about future business. "We are confident that by the mid-1980s, we will be booking more than 600 conventions within a calendar year, not including corporate and small state meetings."

The feature that seems to attract most planners to St. Louis, at least the first time around, is its location. Situated within 500 miles of 83 million people, the city can attract a surprisingly large attendance. Such was the case with the Screen Printers Association International (1650 members), which held its September 1978 convention in St. Louis. "That meeting attracted the largest attendance we had ever had," recalls John M. Crawford, CAE, Executive Vice President of the association, who believes that "a good part of that attendance was due to the city's central location. With airfares as reasonable as they are now, I don't understand why a meeting on either the west or the east coast does not pull as much attendance from members on the opposite side of the country. They do, however, seem willing to go halfway. Being in the middle of the country helps."

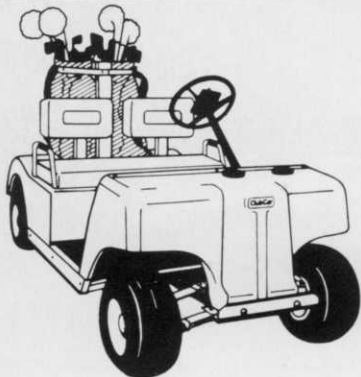
The city's accessibility will be improved even further when the airport expansion

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Continued on Page 26

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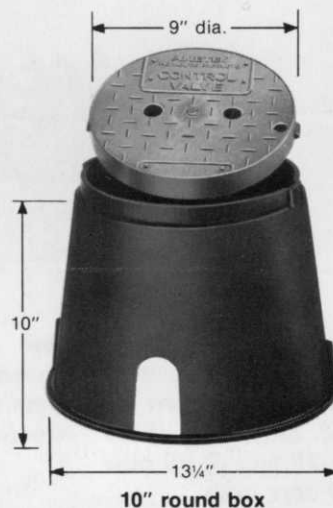
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P.G.A. NATIONAL GOLF CLUB RETURNS TO SOUTH FLORIDA

By DAVID BAILEY

The Professional Golfers Association of America has happy news on the horizon. Their goal of a national headquarters with a golf complex will become a reality with the opening of a golf course in January 1980 at their Palm Beach Gardens location. The P.G.A. facility is the heart of the total project to be developed under the leadership of Llwyd Ecclestone, Jr. The finished product will be completed in the early 1990's and will be the largest in Palm Beach County history. On completion the 23 acre site will house the P.G.A. Headquarters, three golf courses, a resort hotel and a community of 15,000 people. Land for the new complex was purchased from the late billionaire John D. MacArthur.

Since 1974 the P.G.A. Headquarters has been in neighboring Lake Park, Florida. The desire for more than just an office led to numerous site studies in Palm Beach and Mar-

tin Counties. In 1977 the agreement with Llwyd Ecclestone, Jr. was announced with two years work in planning, zoning and environmental clearance . . . thirty-two agencies were involved and their approvals obtained. The firm of George Fazio was chosen as golf course architect with Tom Fazio leading the site work after a ground breaking ceremony in March 1979.

In June 1979 Mr. Ecclestone announced the appointment of Donald Padgett as Director of Golf, a key decision. Padgett has been well schooled in golf and administrative matters. This immediate past President of the P.G.A. comes to South Florida from the 63 hole Callaway Gardens Resort in Georgia. For twenty-three years Don was head professional at Green Hills County Club in Muncie, Indiana.

(Continued on Page 27)



Reading clockwise, starting left we see Larry Weber and Dan Jones, Editor of SOUTH FLORIDA GREEN, standing in a "wash-out" on one of the green slopes . . . forty inches of rain in forty days is more than adequate.

Center top, Don Padgett and Larry Weber standing where huge observation area is being build. Since this photo was made 18 feet of fill now cover a 10-acre area.

Top right, Giant earth movers work long hours to complete the enormous construction job.

Bottom right, "Casual Water" covering the pre-fabricated metal that will be one of the maintenance buildings.

P.G.A. RETURNS (Continued from Page 24)

The scope of this enormous golf complex requires a top-flight golf course superintendent. Llywd Eccleston and Don Padgett obtained such a man in Larry Weber. (See front cover of this issue for photograph of these three men). Larry is certainly well qualified for his position at P.G.A. National. A graduate of the University of Florida, his B.S. Degree was awarded in Ornamental Horticulture (specializing in Turf Grass Management). Weber is well known in South Florida. He was born in Salem, Ohio and raised in Miami. Formerly a member of South Florida Golf Course Superintendents Association he served well as Director and Secretary-Treasurer of our chapter. Larry worked with Bobby Heine in the construction and early years of the Woodlands Country Club in Fort Lauderdale. For five years he was superintendent of Inverrary Country Club where he worked closely with John Montgomery helping to make the Jackie Gleason Classic so successful. Three years ago Larry moved to Sarasota, Florida to oversee construction of the prestigious Meadows Country Club and community. At the Meadows Weber served as general manager, responsible for all phases of the golf facility. As a key member of the five man management team he also coordinated construction of the country club.. This large development encompassed 1300 acres.

Now a bit more about P.G.A. National . . . the turf grass on the new course greens will be Tifgreen 328 bermuda grass and Tifway 419 on tees, fairways and roughs. Larry tells us he has an excellent soil mix to use on the greens. Natural sand is being used to shape the contours, with drain tile at a twelve inch depth in eight inches of gravel. Next comes 300 yards of very coarse sand and 50 yards of peat, both are rototilled to a uniform blend. This construction is being done to aid in maintaining healthy turf in the rainy seasons. The complex will have three maintenance buildings allowing turf equipment shorter travel distances for storage and servicing.

The level of the ground water in the development will be controlled by a master pump station with 2 - 200 H.P. pumps. Multiple 10 inch wells will be utilized to recharge the lakes during the dry season. (See companion article in this issue by Harry McCartha — Interview with Al Frank, Project Superintendent.)

The question of an opening date is always a big topic on any course. The winter target date is a big accomplishment when you remember that land clearing started in April. Weber said, "September and early October were tough times for us . . . *forty inches of rain in forty days!* We were not able to fertilize for six weeks after planting and for this reason growth has been slow." Knowing Larry he will get the job done in spite of the elements.

Earl Hudson, noted landscape architect has established an immense on-site nursery for plants and trees. Over 150,000 plants will be used on the golf courses and environs. Hudson has won many local and national awards. The American Association of Nurserymen awarded him first place nationally for his work at Inverrary and Quayside residential community in Miami.

At this writing (mid-November) construction on the first three courses is underway. Course #1 is completely grassed and is growing beautifully . . . course #2 is being shaped and contoured and #3 is being cleared.

To visit this complex is an exciting experience. Larry Weber's first love is construction and he's hard at it! It's refreshing to watch the Director of Golf (Don Padgett) work with Larry . . . they respect each other and the resulting course should be everything the P.G.A. and Mr. Eccleston dream it will be.

Our Association is honored to recognize P.G.A. in this issue and all of Florida can rejoice that this world golf center is being built in our area.

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Harry McCartha



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exhibit floor, opened it to a more spacious size, put a few sofas on it, and had a lounge in the center of the trade show. It helped to contribute to the atmosphere of a meeting in St. Louis." And, he adds, so did the service provided by the bureau: "It's one of the best convention bureaus that I have worked with anywhere in the country."

Sylvia Rottman offers similar praise. "One particularly helpful service that the bureau provided was to assign one person to stay with the convention throughout the entire process — from booking through completion of the meeting itself. If, for instance, we came up against any kind of problem, rather than contacting the person or organization responsible for the difficulty, we could simply get in touch with our bureau contact, and he would smooth it out. This helped both diplomatically and with communications; it prevented long-distance explanations that can easily be misunderstood and provided us with a person right on the scene who knew our organization and our needs."

The bureau is some 70 years old and is funded primarily by a tourism tax on hotel rooms. Its first responsibility, as Bedford describes it, "is obviously to bring people in to look at St. Louis. Once the meeting is booked and confirmed, we meet with the planners to help them run a smooth convention. We have a staff of registration hostesses who work very closely with convention personnel, and we try to help out locally. We also provide a computerized housing service — in fact, we were the first bureau to go into computer housing."

That housing service is one of the reasons Rottman is so liberal with her praise of the bureau. "We do not use the convention housing office until the very end, when they help us with those who were not able to register in advance. In this instance, one hotel was not able to take a number of rooms that had been assigned

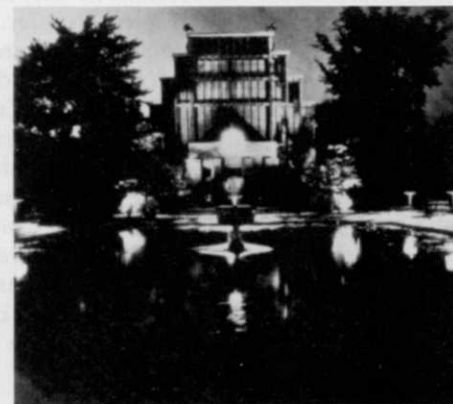
there. I found out about this on Monday, and everyone was due to arrive on Saturday. The woman in charge of housing immediately started calling other hotels in the area. It was very tight at the time; the city was practically sold out. But she kept digging and found a room here, a room there, and helped me to place all of the attendees. She also helped to compose the telegram to advise attendees that their rooms had been changed. As a result, we did not have a single bad comment; our members felt that we had done our best to take care of them."

Hotels

While planners are usually generous with their praise of the convention bureau and center, they seem somewhat less so in their praise of St. Louis's accommodations. The primary problem is apparently not so much with the hotels themselves as with their location. Says Patrick Raleigh: "We used the Chase-Park Plaza as our headquarters hotel because it could meet our need for suites. However, it is 5½ miles away from the convention center, and transportation turned out to be a headache. We set up a shuttle service with Bistate Busing, which was very good, but just getting on the bus and sitting through that long haul, particularly after a day of scientific courses, was less than ideal. It took anywhere from 20 to 40 minutes, depending on traffic, to return to the hotel. This meant that we had to use some staff time for transportation; when, for instance, some of the officers at the convention center had to be at a meeting at the headquarters hotel, the staff had to shuttle them."

Rottman encountered a similar problem but solved it by planning her housing arrangements very carefully. "We used more than 20 properties and that required a great deal of planning. We had to

go as far out as ten miles from the convention center, but we simply worked our shuttle buses around that. And since our nurses had to attend meetings at 7:00 in the morning, we tried to reserve the rooms nearest the convention center for them and housed our exhibit personnel in the farther hotels. We received a few complaints, but mostly the exhibitors agreed that the nurses needed to be closer; they were very philosophical about it. Our shuttle service also helped; we have used the same company for the past three years, and the staff knows our



The St. Louis Floral Conservatory or "Jewel Box" is located in the city's famed Forest Park, site of the 1904 World's Fair.

needs. Buses were scheduled in the downtown area at the peak hours of our meeting every ten to fifteen minutes; in the outlying areas, they ran every half hour to an hour."

The bureau is aware of the need for more hotel rooms closer to the convention center and expects the problem to be soon ameliorated. "As it stands now, we have approximately 4000 rooms in the downtown area," reports Bedford. "That is a sufficient number for many groups, but some won't even look at a city unless it meets a certain minimum number of rooms within five minutes' walking distance. With some of the planned additions to our hotel facilities, we are confident that we will soon be able to attract some of these groups. We are now planning additions that will give us about 3000 more hotel rooms throughout the county. Two major chains are seriously looking at the area around the convention center; we hope to make one announcement later this year and another in 1980. In addition, the Marriott Pavilion is doubling the size of its downtown hotel, which will give us an additional 400 rooms, and three more hotels are going up in the county for a total of close to a thousand more rooms. Another addition under discussion is a 500-room hotel to be located at the old Union Station, about five minutes from the center."



Three St. Louis attractions — Kiener Plaza, the fully restored Old Courthouse, and the Gateway Arch.

Reprinted from "Association and Society Manager".

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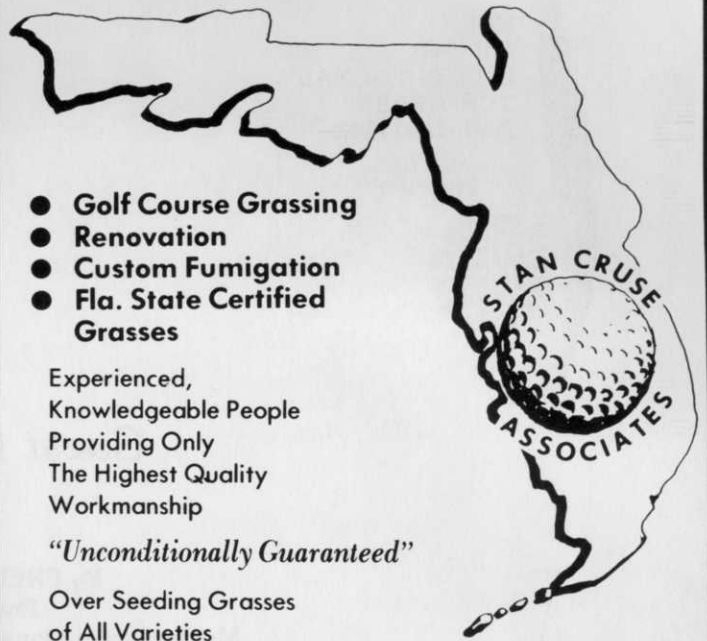
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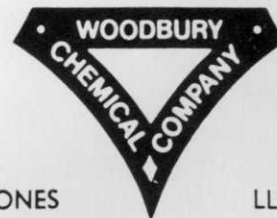
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Fred V. Grau

Guest Editorial

By FRED V. GRAU
President

Musser International Turfgrass Foundation

Should golf clubs provide secretaries for golf course superintendents offices? Before that question can be answered definitively the question of professionalism becomes pertinent. Some offices are such that no self-respecting secretary would work there. Then there are those that are neat and clean, spacious and well ordered. The greatest need exists where the superintendent holds positions in local, state and national professional organizations and, in addition, is involved in publishing a newsletter or a magazine. The superintendent is a businessman with responsibilities involving millions of dollars of investment. Record keeping, book-keeping, correspondence, reports, orders, and other details often are handled in a less-than-efficient manner when the busy season hits. With a secretary maybe more superintendents would answer mail more promptly. Dan Jones has one! I wonder how many other superintendents' secretaries there are? Don't be surprised if a trend is noticed soon.

Quote: "Nothing great ever was accomplished without enthusiasm." Author unknown.