

Hadwick — following in steps of 'Sod-Father'

BY GARY BURCHFIELD

Charlie Hadwick has been superintendent at the Country Club of Lincoln for just five years. But he literally grew up on the course.

His dad, Joe, was superintendent at the club for 33 years. Joe was instrumental in founding the Nebraska Golf Course Superintendents Association, of which Charlie is now president, and the Nebraska Turfgrass Foundation. Associates referred to him affectionately as "the Sod-Father."

Charlie's career began at age 12 when he worked on the night watering crew during the summer. When he reached his 18th birthday, he was promoted by Joe to the day crew, and he continued to work summers while earning a degree in horticulture at the University of Nebraska. He studied turfgrass management under Drs. Ed Kinbacher and Robert Shearman.

After a two-year "assistantship" under Bob Alder at Lodge of the Four Seasons, Lake of the Ozarks, Hadwick returned to Nebraska to take over the superintendent's job at the Country Club of Lincoln.

Because it's one of the oldest courses in Nebraska, considerable pride and prestige are associated with the course. When the course was built in the 1920s it was surrounded by cornfields. One of the older club members recalls when Charles Lindbergh made practice landings on a small field carved out of farmland just west of the golf course.

Today, the Country Club of Lincoln is practically in the middle of town.

"Superintendents have to think more like a golfer today," says Hadwick. "Just eight years ago, the course had about 20,000 rounds played per season. This year, we'll probably have close to 35,000 rounds.

"That's almost too many for a private club. For a course like this, a maximum of somewhere around 25,000 rounds would be better, not only for the turf but for the convenience of members, too."

Despite nearly 5 inches of rain in one 24-hour period in mid-September, the course was only closed for a day and a half.

"Balancing the needs of members and the agronomic needs of the turf isn't always easy," Hadwick says. "But I think



Gary Burchfield photo

Charlie Hadwick in his maintenance building.

superintendents today offer better playing conditions than ever before."

Hadwick has firm opinions on how to manage turf. He has put in perennial ryegrass fairways and gone to triplex mowing at 5/8 inch.

"Our members like it and guests have said these are some of the best fairways they've ever played on," he said.

The fairways before were bluegrass and poa annua, and mid-summer heat stress would too often take out the grass.

Although ryegrass is very susceptible to pythium and brown patch, Hadwick says the hot-weather tolerance of rye enables his crews to keep it drier and minimize fungus.

Winterkill can also be a problem with ryegrass, especially in low, wet areas. "But, it germinates fast, so we can overseed in early spring and have good grass in three to four weeks."

Aeration is critical to maintaining

good fairways, according to Hadwick. "It's the most important 'tool' turf managers have, but too many of them underestimate the importance of aeration in promoting oxygen exchange in the soil.

"A golf course is like a green 'mecca' in the city. The grass and trees supply so much oxygen, while absorbing a lot of pollutants. People don't realize how valuable it is."

"The idea that golf course superintendents are chemical addicts is wrong, too," Hadwick says. "Most of them wouldn't spray if they didn't have to, and they generally use the very least amount they can get by with. Nowhere in the industry are chemicals applied more accurately than on golf courses.

"Plus, the ability of grass to absorb pollutants like exhaust gases far outweighs the disadvantages of using chemicals for pest and disease control!"

For Charlie Hadwick, golf

course management is a demanding but rewarding life. And it is practically the only life he has known.

"My grandfather, also Charlie Hadwick, was superintendent at Jefferson City (Mo.) Country Club for 50 years, and a cousin is superintendent there now," he says.

"My brother John has been superintendent at Grand Island (Neb.) Municipal Golf Course since it opened 12 years ago. Another brother, Bob, is superintendent at Dubs Dread Golf

Course in Lansing, Kansas."

"There's no magic formula for growing good turf," says Hadwick. "You have to make judgments every day, and use your experience and common sense.

"My advice to young people coming into the field today would be, first, to thoroughly understand aeration. With water shortages, increasing pollution levels, et cetera, it's going to become more and more important."

Gary Burchfield is a writer who lives in Lincoln, Neb.

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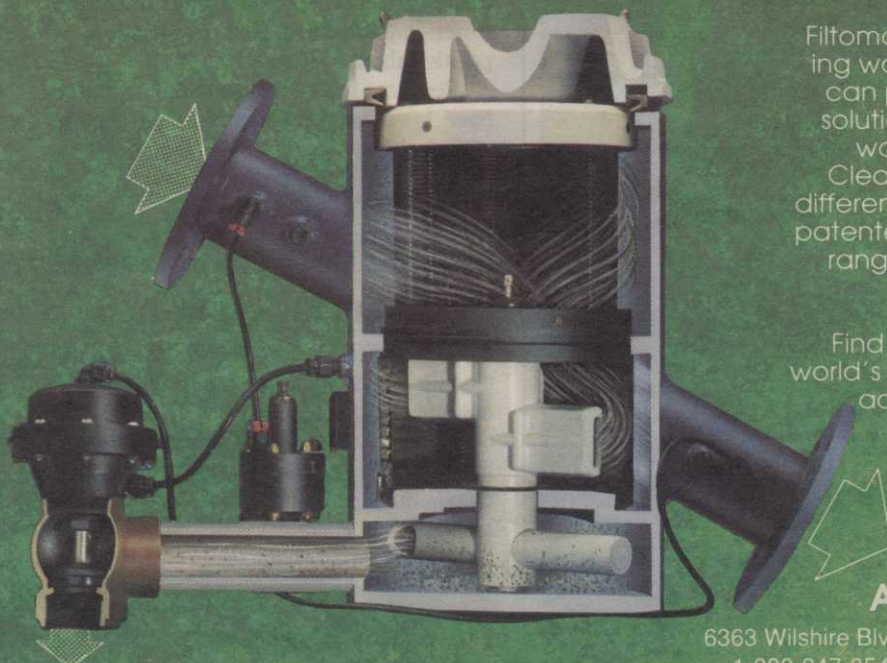


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