

Golf course's water quality no issue for President Bush

(Editor's note: Contributing editor Vern Putney has these thoughts in the midst of the water quality issue facing the golf industry.)

By Vern Putney

The day President George Bush's thyroid condition was announced, he stepped smartly from his helicopter at his Walker's Point summer home in Kennebunkport, Maine, and strode to a nearby garden hose.

He drank copiously and smacked his lips.

Was he returning to his boyhood method of quenching his thirst, or making a statement?

Mainers like to think he was expressing continued confidence in drinking water long considered the world's best.

Water is undergoing intensive scrutiny in areas the Bushes have stayed for lengthy periods. Texas, Washington, D.C., and Camp David, Md., are high on the inspection list.

It is puzzling that wife Barbara also has the Graves' disease symp-

tom.

Once the president alighted, he was re-energized and "relaxed and invigorated as always by the sea," according to press secretary Marlin Fitzwater.

As further proof, Bush a couple of days later expanded his swift 18-hole routine at nearby Cape Arundel Golf Club to 27 with no sign of slowdown.

In perhaps sending a signal to physicians and scientists to look elsewhere for the source of trouble, Bush might have pointed to

Webhannet Golf Club in Kennebunk Beach, five miles away.

Roger L. Lowell, course superintendent there and president of the Maine Golf Course Superintendents Association, noted that the most recent test of the two wells at Webhannet proved the clearest and purest in their 20 years of existence.

"Members, of course, frequently tap these wells for their everyday needs as well as cooling moments during their golf rounds," added Lowell.

He continued: "With all we hear

about ground water quality, it's hard to understand the reasoning behind some movements so concerned about ground water contamination from golf courses. Of course, there is understandable concern for water quality around hazardous waste sites we see on television, where heavy concentrations can seep into the ground.

"Research reports of ground water quality on and around golf courses nationally, where testing has taken place, shows water to be at safe levels. The thatch layer produced by turfgrass restricts penetration of chemicals into the soil."

Edmund A. Muskie, former Maine governor, senator and secretary of state, long has appreciated Webhannet's liquid refreshment. His first course-side home was next to the clubhouse. He now lives little more than a mashie shot from the 14th green.

To the charge that Cape Arundel and Webhannet might be among courses wasting water, Lowell simply counters, "These layouts have no irrigation systems and perhaps no need for such setups. The fairways are green and trim, and hand-watering takes care of tees and greens."

Watching Bush bring the hose to his mouth in the most heavenly of simple pleasures, many a caddie of the early 1930s must have propelled himself back in time. Water then was largely for drinking.

All knew the best water in the world available to the general public had as its source nearby Sebago Lake, and that adjacent Poland Spring catered to the thirsts and palates of an elite world clientele.

Sebago Lake has given ground grudgingly to chlorides and fluorides as population expanded and boat traffic mushroomed. Poland Spring bottled water remains in demand worldwide.

To youths, however, surrounding golf course water holes held a special charm.

No longer can the thirsty tap golf course spring hideaways. Kneeling down to quaff cool, sparkling waters or turning on hoses placed strategically by golf course superintendents no longer is in vogue. Frequently tepid fountains and water stops have replaced the impromptu drink.

There are no cut-and-dried answers, but wrung from 60 years of golf course acquaintance are these observations.

- Water is over-used and abused. The rush to flood the courses in the post-World War II period reached tidal proportions. The price for that overflow reached high-water marks."

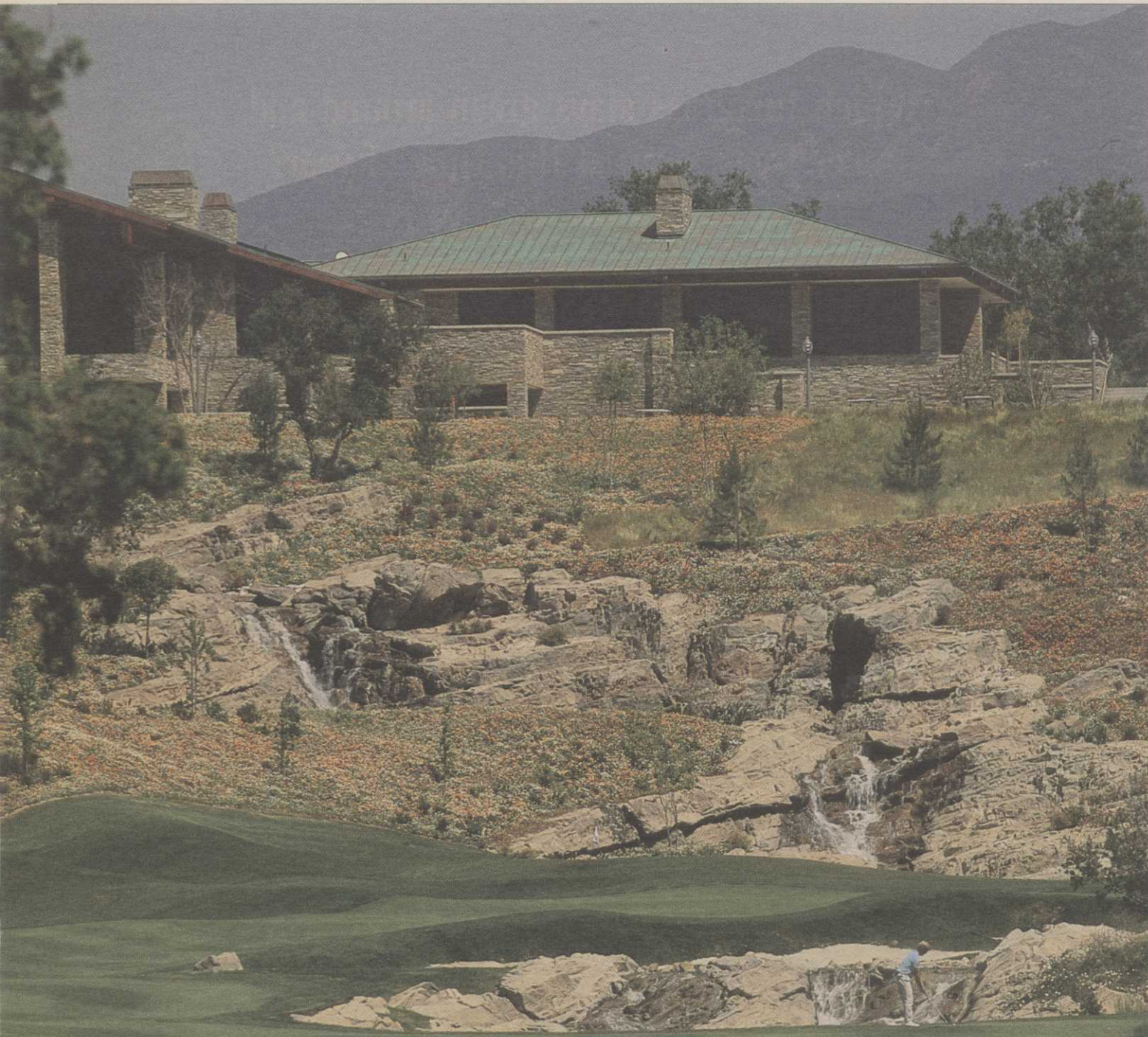
- Latest golf gimmick in the water connection-conundrum is advocacy of brown fairways, a copycat version of playing surfaces in Great Britain."

- Why not step back in time and go one more giant stride? Turn off the freely running hoses, shut down the automatic sprinkler systems and return the fairways to the near-white look of the 1930s."

What's that, you say? Golf courses that aren't a lush green?

Believe it or not, you devotees of

Continued on page 17



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Mass. to require pesticide applicators to file annual reports

Continued from page 1

State. The Green Industry Council, a trade group that represents many of the state's superintendents, fears the information could be used to pass even tougher local pesticide laws.

"Professional pesticide applicators have seen an increasing number of cities and towns in Massachusetts adopt ordinances that look to further regulate the use of pesticides. The Green Industry Council strongly opposes this trend," said Phyllis Gillespie, the council's executive director.

Congress, through FIFRA (Fed-

eral Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act), gives the federal and state governments the authority to regulate, Gillespie said. It recognized the problems that would arise if cities and towns had this authority, she added.

Gillespie said Massachusetts has a strong record of developing regulations that address public concern for safety and the environment, and stressed that the green industry has consistently complied with these regulations and supports equitable legislation and regulations to meet these objectives.

Ed McGuire, chairman of the council's Public Policy Committee, noted that with hundreds of inconsistent local regulations, developed by boards with little technical expertise and/or support, it would be very difficult for green industry professionals to comply with any new laws.

He cited the Town of Mansfield, which recently passed an ordinance requiring pink 11- by 8 1/2-foot signs posted every 50 feet around the property of lawns treated professionally with turf pesticides.

"This ordinance," McGuire said,

"clearly undermines and is overridden by the state regulation — 333 CMR 10.03 (30) and (31) — requiring yellow signs at the point of entry."

Information requested by the state will include product brand name; EPA registration; active ingredients; percentage of active ingredients product form (e.g. liquid, powder); use classification (general, state limited or restricted); total amount of concentrate product applied in reporting year; major crop or site treated; total acreage treated; target pests or class of

pests; and method of application.

Other Massachusetts requirements include:

- no applications of products on the Groundwater Protection List in primary recharge areas if an alternative exists;

- adoption of an integrated pest management program for all applications of products on the Groundwater Protection List in primary recharge areas; and

- an approved pesticide management plan before any soil application of a Groundwater Protection List product.

Bush

Continued from page 16

the game dating "only" from the 1950s, that unyielding surface commonly called "hard-pan" was the norm at most New England courses.

Players coped and adjusted, expected little different, and enjoyed. So the "divot" often was just a puff of dust?

- What were the advantages? Plenty. For openers, the course was playable three weeks earlier in the spring because it had been spared soaking not in Nature's scheme.

By June, the occasional rubber golf shoe had been mothballed. The golfer was on solid earth. Come September, the course was a delight—a fast track inviting low scoring. In late October and early November, leaves and the hunt for stray balls therein slowed playing pace a bit, but there was no slogging through mud as is the current practice. And it was nice to squeeze out another week or two of play, painfully aware that winter's grip soon was to replace golf's grip.

Unlike the modern playing strategy, which is to boom the ball out of sight, left or right, and be fairly sure there will be an open shot to a not-too-distant green, accuracy then was the key. Keeping the ball in the hard-baked fairways on the 10th through 15th hole stretch at Portland Country Club during the mid-30s approached an art form. And there was no convenient clearing once the ball reached the uncooperative rough.

The most deft practitioner of the straight and narrow was host pro Ernest W. Newnham. The fiercely competitive 130-pounder captured his fifth straight Maine Open championship by hitting driver-driver to the 487-yard 16th for an easy birdie. As his caddie, I was as amazed as playoff opponent Eddie Bush. I never saw another "on in two" in nine years of bag-toting.

The secret of his success was pronating (turning over his wrists) and creating amazing overspin on the ball for added distance. Newnham and equally bantam Ben Hogan shared that secret with few.

What chance would Newnham have on the lush fairways demanded by the modern golfer? Next to none. His line drive shots would hit the soft ground like a wounded duck. The ball would bury. To Newnham, there was no such thing as a preferred lie or 'playing relief.' He'd be hopelessly out of touch with golf as played today.

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