

Venerated newsman ignores the basics, again

Before I get started, let me say that I've never liked Paul Harvey. I never liked his voice or his freewheeling use of powerful opinion, disguised as unbiased reporting. I never liked the way he takes complex issues and boils them down to 125 words and passes them off as common sense.

His reckless, uninformed diatribes (see story page 1) shouldn't be called "News and Comment" — just "Comment" would suffice.

Harvey's standard operating procedure is all too evident — and after my years in the daily newspaper world, all too familiar. Holed up in his Chicago office, he pulls a couple stories off the A.P. wire and proceeds to lambaste a profession he clearly knows nothing about. He doesn't make calls. He doesn't check facts. He doesn't put idle comments in

context.

He gives his opinion, then goes back to the wire machine looking for more fodder.

Apparently, he needn't bother to defend or explain his actions, either. He didn't return repeated phone calls from this newspaper.

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It's interesting to examine Harvey's comments after piecing together the events of this golf conference in Wilmington.

He wasn't there. He didn't talk to anyone from the North Carolina Coastal Federation (NCCF) or the University of North Carolina at Wilmington, the conference hosts. He didn't call the local newspapers for additional, contextual information. (I know, because I called them. In fact, Carol Frey, the



Hal Phillips,
editor

day/metro editor at the Raleigh News & Observer, laughed out loud when I told her the reason for my call. "I've been involved in a zillion stories that have ended up on Paul Harvey's show, and I have never spoken to the man," she said.)

This sort of research is basic stuff.

Harvey gathers all the information he thinks he needs from local newspaper stories, which are often the direct sources for A.P. reports. For example, the *Wilmington Morning Star* reported that, "More than 50 different chemicals are used on golf courses to kill bugs, weeds and rodents, according to experts at the symposium."

Sound familiar, Paul? That's just what you said, minus the attribution, of course.

Harvey embellished this statement by adding, "and regulation of the use of these chemicals is almost nonexistent." Has this guy ever heard of the federal Environmental Protection Agency? How about additional state and local controls?

Harvey was no doubt referring to the lack of additional state regulations regarding pesticide use on the North Carolina coast, a point made clearly by the *Morning Star* reporter. Facts often cloud a dramatic statement, don't they, Paul.

Harvey's insinuation that architects and superintendents "will not behave unless there are new laws to require it," is a classic case of ignoring context to suit your editorial purposes.

After reading numerous newspaper clips and talking to conference attendees, I pieced

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At last, college test courses to provide definitive results

Knowledge is good. That's a fair statement, wouldn't you agree?

Wrong! (Or at least Partially Wrong!)

For my taste, you'd have to modify it to: Knowledge is often good. Partial knowledge can be dangerous. The crucial factor is what you know — then using that knowledge wisely.

A lot of intelligent people are hiking mountain trails, birdwatching in the forests, or fishing trout streams. They are knowledgeable about the deciduous trees and the rainbow brookies. They know of the yellowhammer bird, yellow jacket wasp and yellow jasmine shrub — and perhaps even read yellow journalism's descendants in the new-age, activist press, for that matter.

And so, armed with this great knowledge, they feel they know that any golf course must infringe on the lives of the birds, the trout and the trees.

It only makes sense, right? You spray a chemical on a weed, it's gotta kill something else, too. You treat a green with a pesticide, that pesticide has to leach down into the drinking water supply.

"Sensible" arguments from environmental activists have stopped golf course proposals dead in their steps for decades. But a number of statements that "just make sense" are about to be buried (have an archaeological expert check that piece of ground before you bury it, please) by scientific findings.

While little research historically has existed outside of small turf plots at a research station here or a university there, all of a sudden the University of Georgia and Clemson University are on the verge of having golf courses built that will be used exten-



Mark Leslie,
managing editor

sively as research laboratories.

Seemingly out of thin air, the University of Georgia sits on the verge of having a 21-hole golf course built on land at its Griffin Experimental Station (see story page 1). A

nine-man team of entomologists, plant pathologists and breeders, soil physics experts and others is ready to jump head-first into a massive, in-depth look at the environmental effects of every aspect of golf course maintenance. Last year, Clemson began steps toward building an 18-hole facility at the disposal of students and faculty from agronomists to physical therapists to hotel management.

There will be no smoke and mirrors here. It will be facts and proof — whichever side the study results come down on. One side or the other — environmental activists or the

golf industry — will have ammunition for planning board meetings: The truth according to the latest science.

No chemical company money is supporting these studies. So the word "collusion" can remain in the dumpster (or solid waste transfer station), thank you.

These scientists will begin their research with no foregone conclusions in mind. So the word "biased" can be erased from the enviro-speakers' character defamation, hallelujah.

These projects are refreshing and exciting. Add to them the Clay County Parks Department course outside St. Louis (see *GCN April*, page 27), with its catch basins testing leachate from all 18 greens... and you've got high expectations and anticipation.

Count the days to the release of data from these facilities and you can count the days when a little, dangerous knowledge will be replaced by substantive science.

Letters

HARVEY NEEDS TO BE EDUCATED

To the editor:

It was Thursday, March 25, at 12 noon, when I took time out of a hectic spring schedule to sit down a few minutes, eat a sandwich, and listen to a man on the radio named Paul Harvey. For years I have admired this man and anxiously await his daily syndicated broadcast of his "News and Comment." Mr. Harvey is a very wise and intelligent man, and has an

The above letter was written to The Greener Side, the superintendents association newsletter for New Jersey. It has been reprinted here with permission of the editor.

interesting, conservative viewpoint. As he began talking about a golf course, my ears perked up even more. Evidently there were some birds killed on a golf course, according Mr. Harvey, from a misuse of pesticides.

He went on to inform the United States that golf courses often use more than 50 different pesticides. He made a comment that the golf course industry (targeting both architects and greenkeepers) was hardly regulated concerning pesticide use, and that the only way to eliminate this pesticide problem would be to impose much tighter regulations and penalties.

I became outraged upon listening to such nonsense, and such

foolish accusations. I would like to show Mr. Harvey first hand the 800 to 1,000 geese that reside at Bey Lea all fall, winter and early spring, not to mention the number of various species of ducks, song birds, deer, rabbits, squirrels, groundhogs, fox, fish, etc. To the best of my knowledge we have never lost one animal due to an improper pesticide application in the 21 years I have been associated with this golf course.

As an environmentally conscious golf course superintendent, I felt hurt and betrayed when I heard this report from an individual I admired even as a child. I immediately notified Chris Carson and Kirk Kahler of the GCSAA to

make them aware of the detrimental impact this could have on our profession. I felt as though Mr. Harvey should be educated to the important role our golf courses play not only to the golfing public; but to the wildlife that abound on our beautiful facilities. He should also see our professional attitudes concerning the maintenance of our precious ecosystems.

This event even further substantiates the "fish-bowl" theory that we operate under on a daily basis.

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