

Misplaced concern drives EPA regulatory policy

The ultimate fate of America's golfing public was relegated to secondary importance when Dr. Burton Kross presented results of his GCSAA-commissioned Mortality Study last month in Dallas.

Kross, an associate professor of epidemiology at the University of Iowa, reported that, historically, golf course superintendents have been more likely to contract certain types of cancer than the general public. And while he stressed there is no proven causal relationship between the cancers and the superintendents' exposure to pesticides, he stated rather

definitively that golfers — or course "patrons" — are in no way at risk.

This came as no surprise to industry members in the Dallas audience, but it also struck me as somewhat ironic because pesticide policy — as issued by the federal EPA and various state agencies — is almost completely driven by the perceived effects of chemical exposure on the public at large, not superintendents. In a culture where stories of licking golf balls seem to carry more popular weight than the



Hal Phillips,
editor

preponderance of scientific data, it was refreshing to hear Kross dispel an all-too-common myth — namely, that pesticide use poses a threat to the general welfare.

Whether it poses a threat to superintendents is not clear,

which is why the GCSAA, chemical manufacturers and the golf course industry all support further study.

Most everyone acknowledges that chemical handling practices were woefully insufficient during the 1940s, '50s and '60s, when subjects of the Mortality

Study — those GCSAA members who died between 1970 and 1992 — tended to their courses. Further, most everyone agrees that manufacturers have complied above and beyond the call of duty when it comes to applicator training, specific labeling and continual laboratory testing. The 10 years of research which any product must undergo before EPA approval, speaks for itself.

The new GCSAA leadership did the right thing by addressing the study pro-actively: Quickly releasing the story to news organizations, soliciting the input of other industry

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Take note: Quotes worth remembering from Dallas '94

Attitudes and foundations. These are what the International Golf Course Conference and Show provides and supports each year. And so it was in 1994 — from the educational sessions on agronomy, to superintendent Peter Leuzinger's rendition on attitude, to U.S. Golf Association Green Section agronomist Bob Brame's analogy between the foundations of greenkeeping and faith.

Leuzinger's quote of an unknown author about attitude was one of a number of interesting notes and quotes gleaned at the conference. Here they are, starting with his:

"The longer I live the more I realize the impact of attitude on life. Attitude to me is more

important than facts. It is more important than the past. Than education. Than money. Than circumstances. Than failures. Than successes. Than what other people think, or say, or do. It is more important than appearance, giftedness or skills. It will make or break a company, a church, a home. The remarkable thing is, we have a choice every day regarding the attitude we want to live that day. We cannot change our past. And we cannot change the fact that people will act in a certain way. We cannot change the inevitable. The only thing we can do is play on the one string we have, and that is



Mark Leslie,
managing editor

our attitude. I am convinced that life is 10 percent what happens to me and 90 percent how I react to it. And so it is with you. We are in charge of our attitudes."

Politics invades the links: Hearing a long-winded congratulatory letter from President Clinton, Old Tom Morris Award-winner Byron Nelson said: "It goes on and on, doesn't it? If he keeps writing like that I might have to vote for him next time."

Factoids remedy, bring on the TV cameras: Ron Dodson, president of the Audubon Society of New York: "We can deal with factoids with Preparation F."

No copycats here: "I don't know how people can copy golf holes. It's impossible. We couldn't even copy our own," said Roger Rulewich, asked by Sunbelt to replicate a par-3 hole on all the Jones Trail courses in Alabama.

Hands-down: Best-looking couple in the business is Bob and Christine Faulks of Greensmix.

He just keeps going and going and...: In a surprise appearance at the American Society of Golf Course Architects session, 87-year-old Robert Trent Jones Sr. said that although a visit to a chiropractor three years ago resulted in a broken back that has slowed him down, it has not stopped

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Letters

HURDZAN ANSWERS EPA CHIEF

Michael J. Hurdzan, who heads Hurdzan Golf Course Design, Inc., in Columbus, Ohio, sent *Golf Course News* this copy of his letter to EPA Administrator Carol N. Browner.

Dear Ms. Browner:

I just finished reading your guest editorial in *Golf Course News* (January 1994 issue) and either you or I are very badly informed.

You specifically indicated that golf courses use four to seven times more pesticides than farms. But how about compared to a home lawn, vegetable garden or even the White House Rose Gardens and grounds?

You also indicated the increased sensitivity of children who walk golf courses, and pesticide runoff that can severely threaten drinking water supplies. Is the basis of highlighting those issues to inform or inflame?

I consider myself an aggressive environmental advocate with a strong earth science background (Ph.D. in plant and soil sciences) who stays in tune with all golf course-related issues and incidents. Yet I have no knowl-

edge of any incidents you allude to, at least in the past five years. Therefore, I would appreciate it if a member of your staff could specifically cite proven examples such as you mention.

If your staff finds no such incident, then I think it would be appropriate for you to so state in another guest editorial. Frankly, the action plan of your letter reads like something from the mid-1980s, for golf courses and turf managers have been doing what you suggest for years.

We in the golf course industry pride ourselves on being the leaders, and not followers, in this current green revolution. I can provide your staff scores of recent research findings, including those from the EPA's Cape Cod study, that support my point and vindicate golf courses.

I would expect a person of your leadership position to be rather open-minded and deliberate about any position you enunciate as administrator of the EPA. I would further expect you to be more like the blind scales of justice, weighing proven evidence and data with the goal of implementing long-term protection of earth, rather

than simply distributing outdated, unsubstantiated advocacy rhetoric. For the sake of science and future generations who depend upon us, let us deal in fact and not scare propaganda.

I look forward to your answer, for if the communication folks of the turf industry are covering up severe or significant environmental degradation or incidents, they need to be taken to task.

As a passenger and parent on this spaceship, I want to know if I or my colleagues are making mistakes or are acting in an irresponsible manner. These issues are far too serious to generalize about or to cover up. Likewise, if we are doing a good job, we deserve some recognition and praise.

I am clearly concerned, not just about the perception of golf courses in the environmental continuum, but also the reality of our role. I know of a multitude of positive impacts, and I want to work on reducing or removing the negative ones, but we must be specific.

Please contact me if I can further assist you.

Michael J. Hurdzan, president
Hurdzan Design Group
Columbus, Ohio

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What follows is a transcript of Paul Harvey's radio program. According to Harvey's office, this particular portion aired at 12:03, CST, on Feb. 8, 1994 — one day after release of the GCSAA-commissioned mortality study. Mr. Harvey's was contacted for comment, but did not respond.

Two years ago, you and I talked about the pesticides poisoning so many birds, that our golf courses face a silent spring. I received some indignant response from greens keepers and their association, and from pesticides manufacturers. They were adamant in their insistence that the stuff they were spraying on fairways and greens was not toxic. It was, and it still is.

Today the Golf Course Superintendent's Association of America is holding its annual meeting in Dallas, and a study commissioned by that organization of superintendents is reporting that not only

are golf course pesticides killing the birds, but they're killing golf course superintendents also. Golf course superintendents have a higher incidence of cancer.

The association has to know that this is going to open the door to lawsuits by golf course workers against their employers for exposing themselves to cancer causing chemicals. A statistical mortality study found among golf course superintendents more lung cancer, more brain cancer, more cancers of the large intestine and the prostate, especially however, lung cancer.

Dr. Burton Cross [sic], University of Iowa, one of the researchers on this project, recommends further studies and recommends meanwhile that golf course workers minimize however possible their exposure to pesticides. There's a moral here which demands to be underscored. We and the beautiful wild things live in harmony together, or we perish together.

Phillips comment

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associations and, indeed, commissioning the research in the first place. This won't stop various media outlets from twisting its results to suit their own purposes. Be prepared for all sorts of "revelations."

Kross' study did reveal much, but it also revealed built-in checks and balances. As it has always been, superintendents have the greatest stake in the safety of chemical products and sound application procedures. The current generation of superintendents has always recognized this fact. Here's hoping this is one of the messages that rings loud and clear in future months, as the media seizes on the Mortality Study and attempts to interpret its results.

...

The one-man media outlet undisputed king of homespun bombast, old friend Paul Harvey, has already seized another opportunity to trash golf course superintendents. His Feb. 8 report on the Mortality Study appears on this page, at left. You're not going to like it, but *Golf Course News* believes that dissenting views are most dangerous when they lack an audience. How else can there be an appropriate response?

A quick recap of Harvey's stated views on the subject of golf course pesticide use reveals the adaptability of his unique value system.

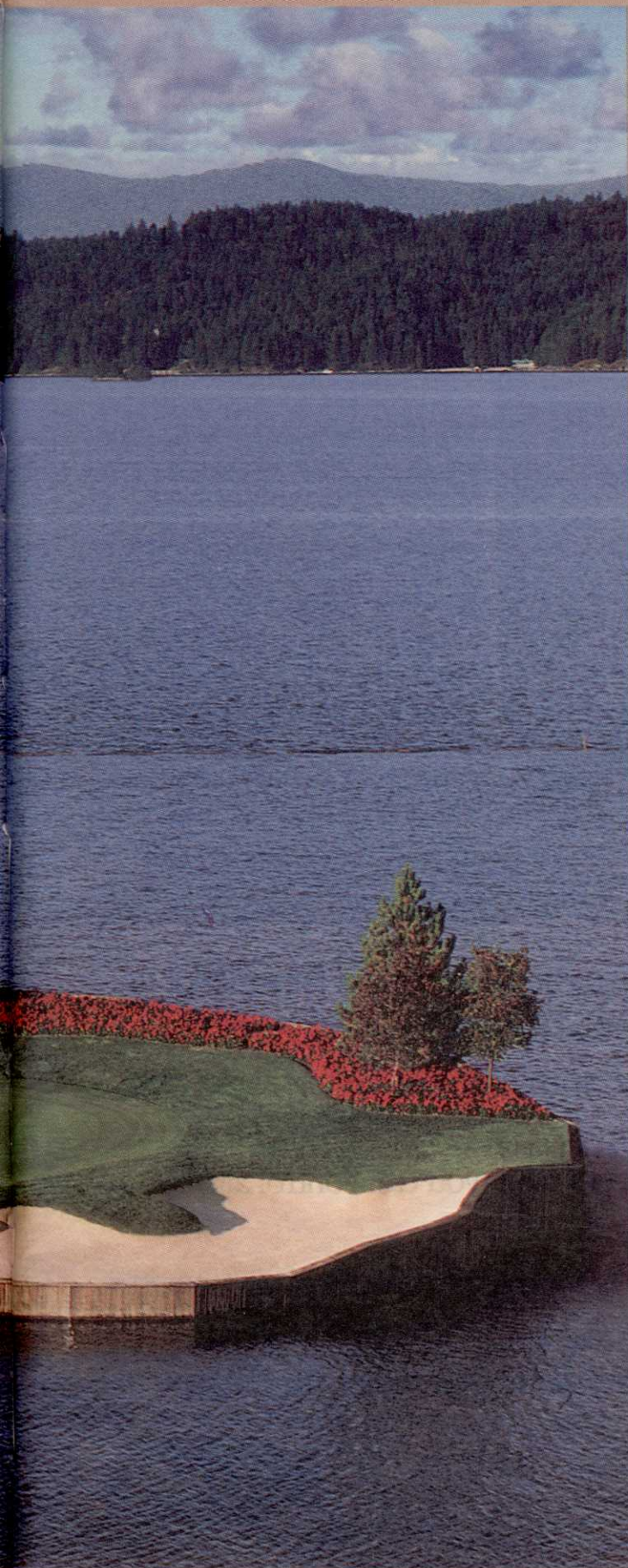
Last April (one year ago, not two years, Paul), after coming across an Associated Press report from a North Carolina environmental forum, he said golf course superintendents were killing birds on their courses. Audubon Society officials and organizers of the North Carolina conference later refuted him in the pages of *Golf Course News*, but why ruin a good story with facts?

A few months later, he noted diminishing job opportunities in the agricultural industry and encouraged turf students to explore careers as golf course superintendents. Hmmm... Why would Mr. Harvey encourage our young men and women to enter a profession that would appear to specialize in killing birds?

His latest parry draws the definitive connection between pesticide exposure and cancer — contrary to the insistence of Dr. Kross, who authored the study — then speculates that superintendents will start suing golf course owners over the matter.

And for the record, it's Dr. Burton Kross, with a "K". I suppose it doesn't matter when you're on radio.

If this guy weren't so widely syndicated, he'd be hilarious.



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